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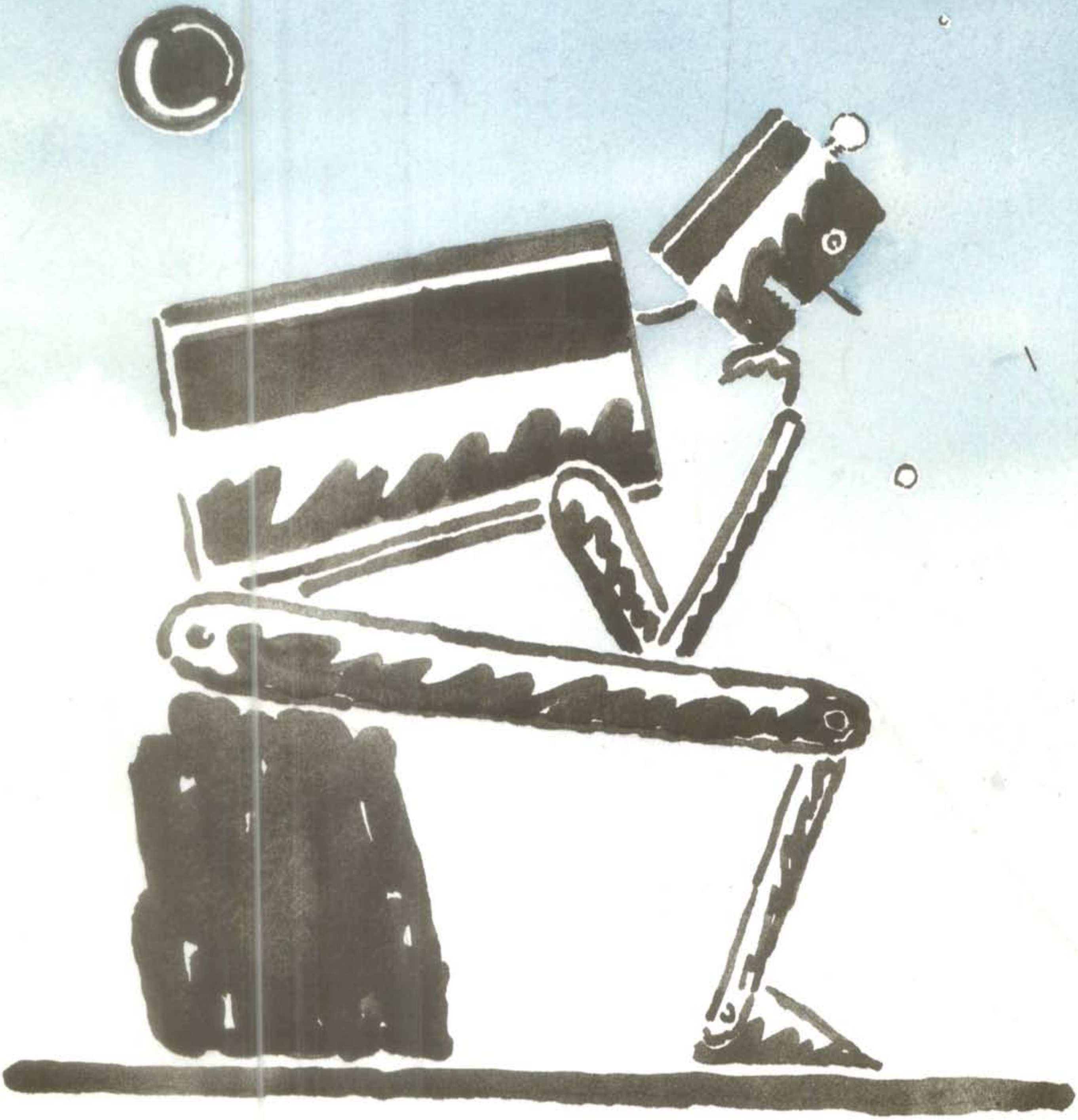

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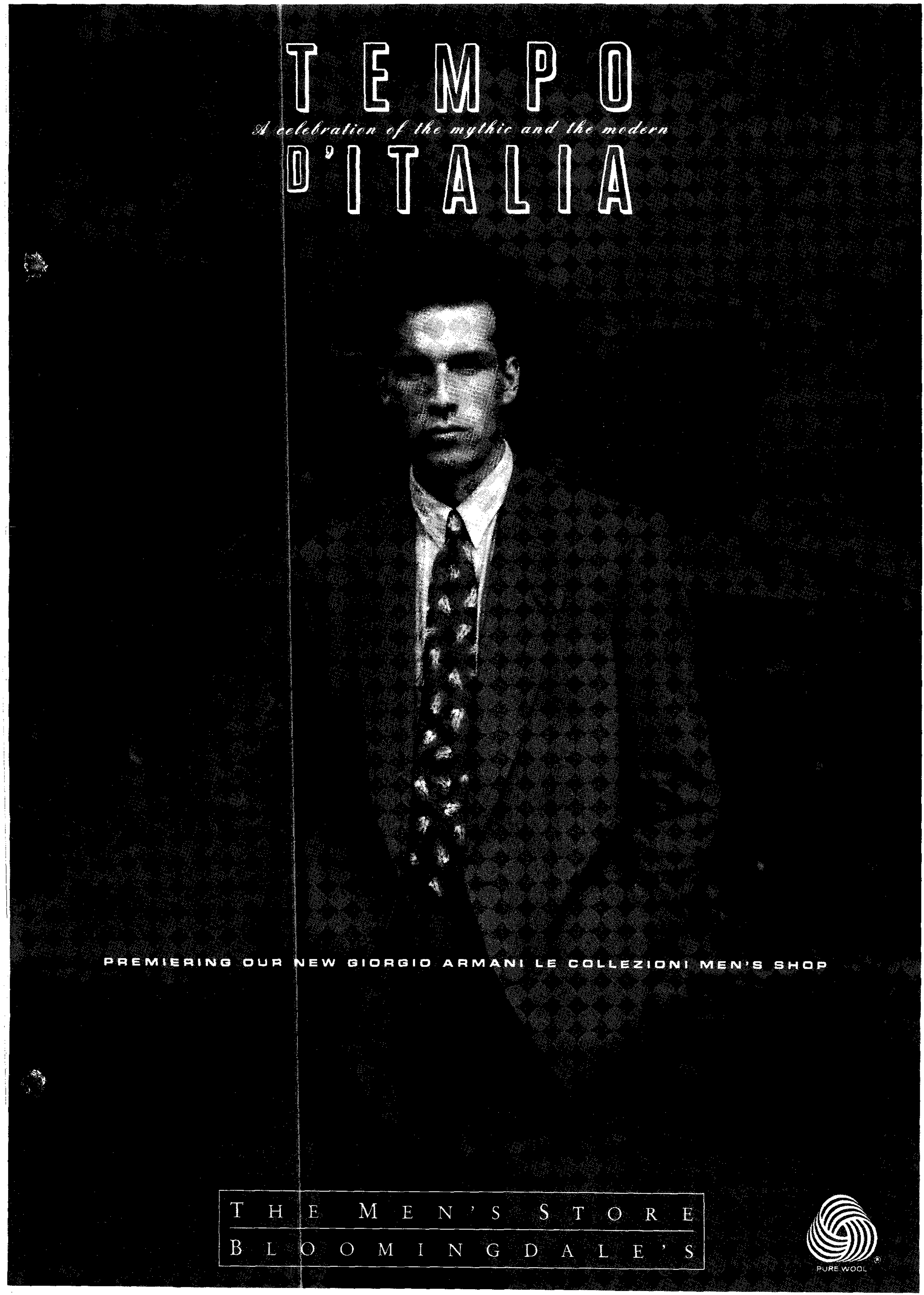

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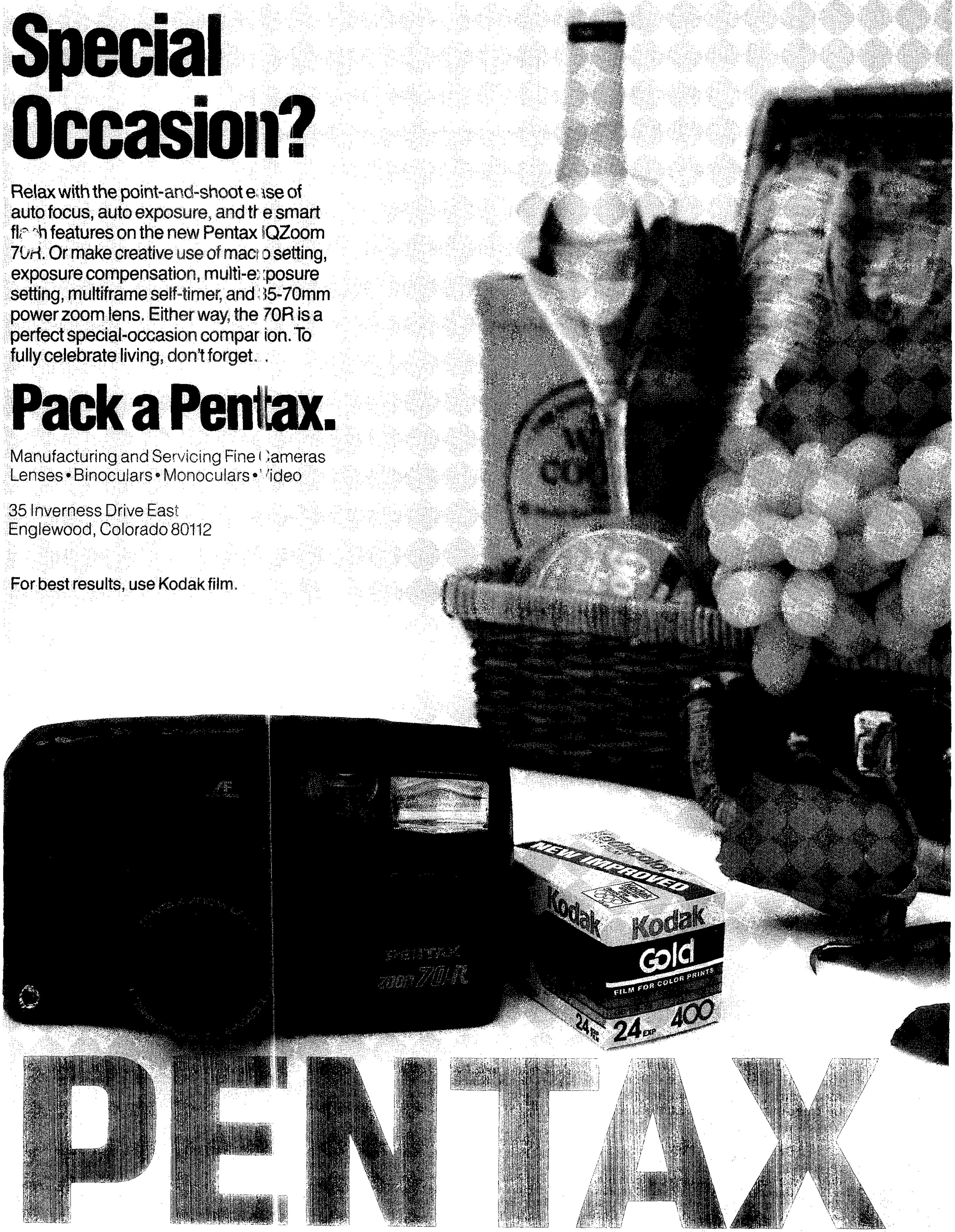
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# GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

## THE THEATRE

MANY of those who saw Ruth Draper perform, either early in her lengthy career or during one of her "farewell" tours, in the fifties, were stamped with such thorough admiration for her talent that they cannot bear even the prospect of someone else undertaking her roles. For many of these people, Miss Draper's progeny—and there's a sense in which all modern monologuists are her descendants—are more acceptable. At least they do their own material. But something must be said for the revival of the Draper pieces themselves, whether in adaptations (such as the music-inflected "Italian Lesson" that is part of the Jean Stapleton concoction currently at CSC Rep) or in more straightforward re-creations. At the very least, such engagements keep Miss Draper's memory alive, spurring new audiences to seek out the recordings of a performer who was not merely a humorist but an exact observer of human follies.

Patricia Norcia, the most avid keeper of the Draper flame, returns to Weill Recital Hall on October 6 and 7 with two programs. Since her last Weill engagement, Miss Norcia has, among other things, been busy polishing her Draper for upcoming appearances in England. This past March, she went to London to scout out a theatre, finally settling on the Duke of York's, where Miss Draper herself had performed. "We asked the theatre manager for any memorabilia," Miss Norcia told us, "and he found a card saying that Ruth had last played the theatre on 4/6/54—which is my birthday, day and year." Miss Norcia later discovered that the date was not actually her birthday, April 6, 1954, but, this being England, June 4, 1954. The revelation did not undo her. There have been synchronicities between her life and Draper's before; there will undoubtedly be others; and, meanwhile, much of London seems to be queuing for tickets at the Duke of York's door.

### OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

**The Baby Dance**—Linda Purl and Stephanie Zimbalist star in a new play by Jane Anderson. In previews. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782.)

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**Beau Jest**—A comedy by James Sherman, which was originally done last year, in Chicago. Previews begin Oct. 2. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

**Circle Repertory Company**—The first play of the season is Timothy Mason's **BABYLON GARDENS.** Timothy Hutton and Mary-Louise Parker head the cast. Previews through Oct. 6. Opens Oct. 8 at 8. (99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100.)

**Damien**—William Walsh stars in a 1976 play by Aldyth Morris. Opens Oct. 1 at 8. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 757-3318.)

*Jean Stapleton in "Bon Appétit!"*

**Finkel's Follies**—A show billed as "a new American musical vaudeville," conceived by and starring Fyvush Finkel. In previews. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038.)

**Nick & Nora**—Barry Bostwick and Joanna Gleason are Nick and Nora Charles in this musical murder mystery, inspired by Dashiell Hammett's "Thin Man" characters, by Arthur Laurents (book), Charles Strouse (score), and Richard Maltby, Jr. (lyrics). Mr. Laurents directed. Riley, a Broadway newcomer, plays Asta. Previews begin Oct. 8. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

**On Borrowed Time**—A revival of the 1938 play by Paul Osborn, with George C. Scott, who also directed, Conrad Bain, Nathan Lane, and Teresa Wright. Previews through Oct. 8. Opens Oct. 9 at 6:45. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

**Promised Land**—A new musical by George Fischoff, presented by the Lamb's Theatre Company. Previews begin Oct. 3. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

**The Real Live Brady Bunch**—Episodes from the TV series, reënacted by the Annoyance Theatre, of Chicago. Something called "The Real Live Game Show" comes first. Opens Oct. 1 at 8, and runs through Dec. 1. (Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. 475-5120.)

**Return to the Forbidden Planet**—A musical, imported from London, loosely based on the 1956 movie "Forbidden Planet." Bob Carlton wrote the book and directed; the rock-and-roll score consists of fifties and sixties tunes. The cast includes Gabriel Barre, Julee Cruise, Allison Briner, Robert McCormick, and Steve Steiner. In previews. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

**The World of Ruth Draper**—Patricia Norcia presents two programs. Oct. 6 at 2: "In a Church in Italy," "The Italian Lesson," and "Four Imaginary Folk Songs."... ¶ Oct. 7 at 8: "A Scottish Immigrant at Ellis Island," "Doctors and Diets," "The Actress," and—new to the Norcia repertoire—"At the Court of Philip IV." (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. For information about tickets, call 769-4217.)

**Young Playwrights Festival**—Presenting "Donut World," by Matthew Peterson; "Man at His Best," by Carlota Zimmerman; "Secrets to Square Dancing," by Denise Maher; and "I'm Not Stupid," by David Rodriguez. The directors were Michael Mayer, Gloria Muzio, Mark Brokaw, and Seret Scott. Preview on Oct. 1. Opens Oct. 2 at 8. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

### OPENED RECENTLY

**And the World Goes 'Round: The Songs of Kander & Ebb**—A musical revue, with Joel Blum, Bob Cuccioli, Karen Mason, Terry Burrell, and Karen Ziémba. Andrea Green substitutes for Ms. Ziémba in some performances; Marin Mazzie replaces Ms. Mason starting Oct. 8. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

**Body and Soul**—John Jason and Tom Delling star in John Glines' gay romantic comedy. (Courtyard Playhouse, 39 Grove St. 869-3530.)

**Bon Appétit!**—Jean Stapleton in two short operas by Lee Hoiby. The first is a musical staging of Ruth Draper's monologue "The Italian Lesson"; the second is a setting [illegible] a Julia Child cooking lesson. (CSC, 135 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

**Breaking Legs**—The Mafia meets Off Broadway. Vincent Gardenia and Joseph Mascolo play a pair of mobsters who back a new play in order to win a young dramatist for Gardenia's daughter. Tom Dulack wrote the comedy; John Tillinger directed it. With Larry Storch, Ronald Maccone, Nick Wyman, and, above all, Susan Giosa as the daughter who spins the plot. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/3/91.) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

**Damon Runyon's Tales of Broadway**—A show conceived and performed by John Martello. (Double Image, 15 Vandam St. 924-1120.)

**Folks Remembers a Missing Page**—A play written and performed by J. E. Gaines. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Nat Horne, 440 W. 42nd St. 307-7171. Closes Oct. 6.)

**The Good Times Are Killing Me**—The cartoonist Lynda Barry devised this memory play of words and pop tunes about a racially mixed neighborhood. At the heart of it is the friendship of two little girls, one white, the other black, who are delightfully portrayed by Angela Goethals and Chandra Wilson. The undercurrent of serious comment on race doesn't add much, but every humorous scene scores a bull's-eye. The show was seen this spring at Second Stage. (5/6/91) (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

**Lips Together, Teeth Apart**—Two couples share a beach house on Fire Island over the Fourth of July weekend, in Terrence McNally's very funny play about a number of serious matters. With Roxanne Hart, Anthony Heald, Jonathan Hadary, and Deborah Rush; directed by John Tillinger. (7/8/91) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

**Lost in Yonkers**—There's not one glimmer of honesty or authenticity in this family melodrama by Neil Simon. Set in Yonkers during the Second World War, it's about what happens when a cowering, pathetic man has to leave his two adolescent sons with his intimidating mother for the better part of a year. (3/11/91) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.)

**Macbeth**—Stephen McHattie stars in the Riverside Shakespeare Company's season opener. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

**Miss Saigon**—Oh, the horror! The horror! (4/29/91) (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.)

**Pageant**—A musical spoof of beauty contests. Book and lyrics by Bill Russell and Frank Kelly and music by Albert Evans. (Blue Angel, 321 W. 44th St. 262-3333.)

**Penn & Teller Rot in Hell**—Seen recently on the Great White Way, the dynamic duo are [illegible]ow performing their repertoire of tricks Off Broadway. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038.)

**The Secret Garden**—This lovely musical adaptation of the classic children's story by Frances Hodgson Burnett isn't just a kiddie show. Subtle, charming, intelligent, and wholly literary in its approach to adaptation, it manages both to be faithful to the spirit of the book and to comment on the particular moment in time that produced it. (5/13/91) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

**The Skin of Our Teeth**—Thornton Wilder's play, presented by the Jean Cocteau Repertory. Craig Smith and Elise Stone lead the cast. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

**Song of Singapore**—A musical with a promising concept: turn a Polish veterans' hall into

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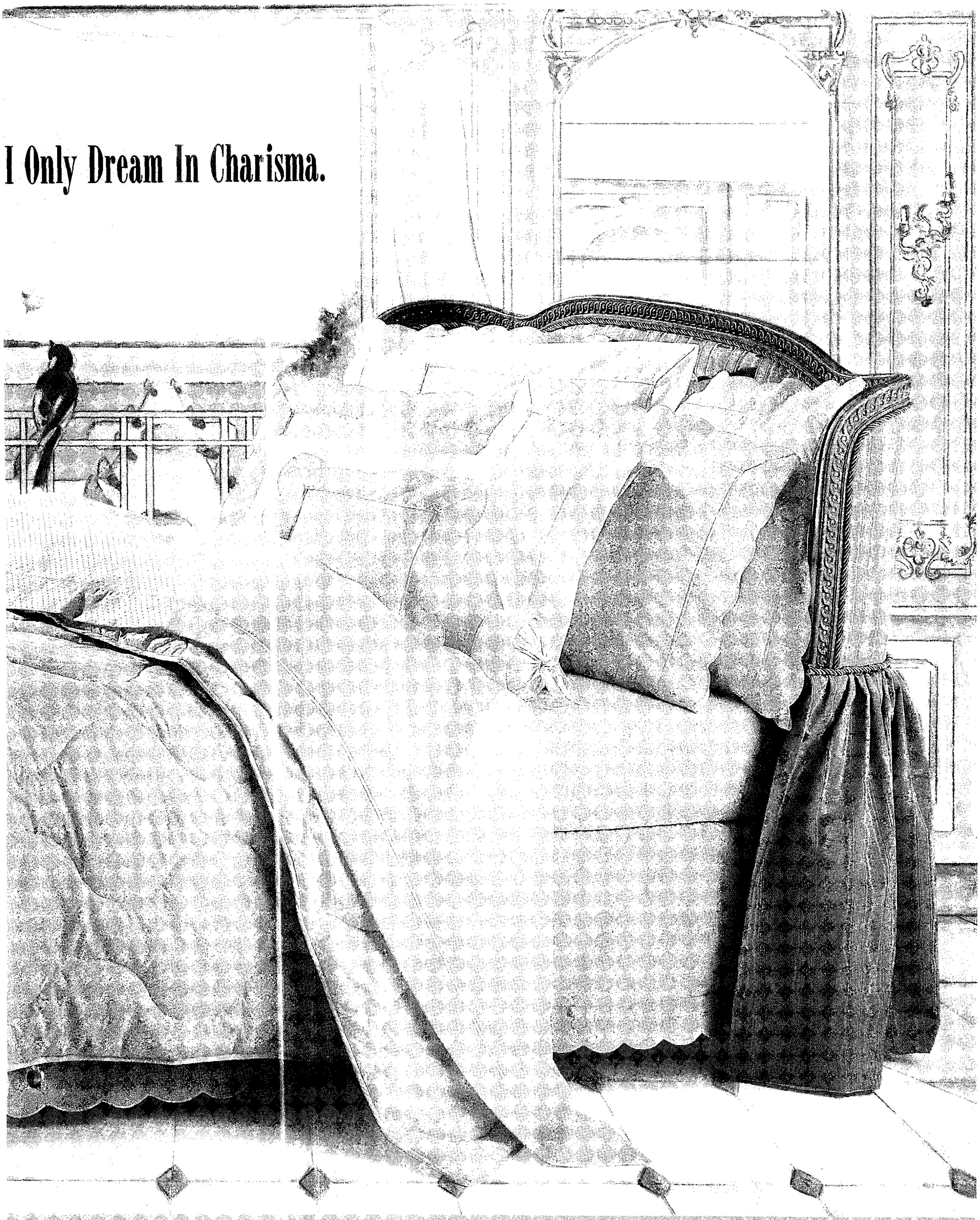

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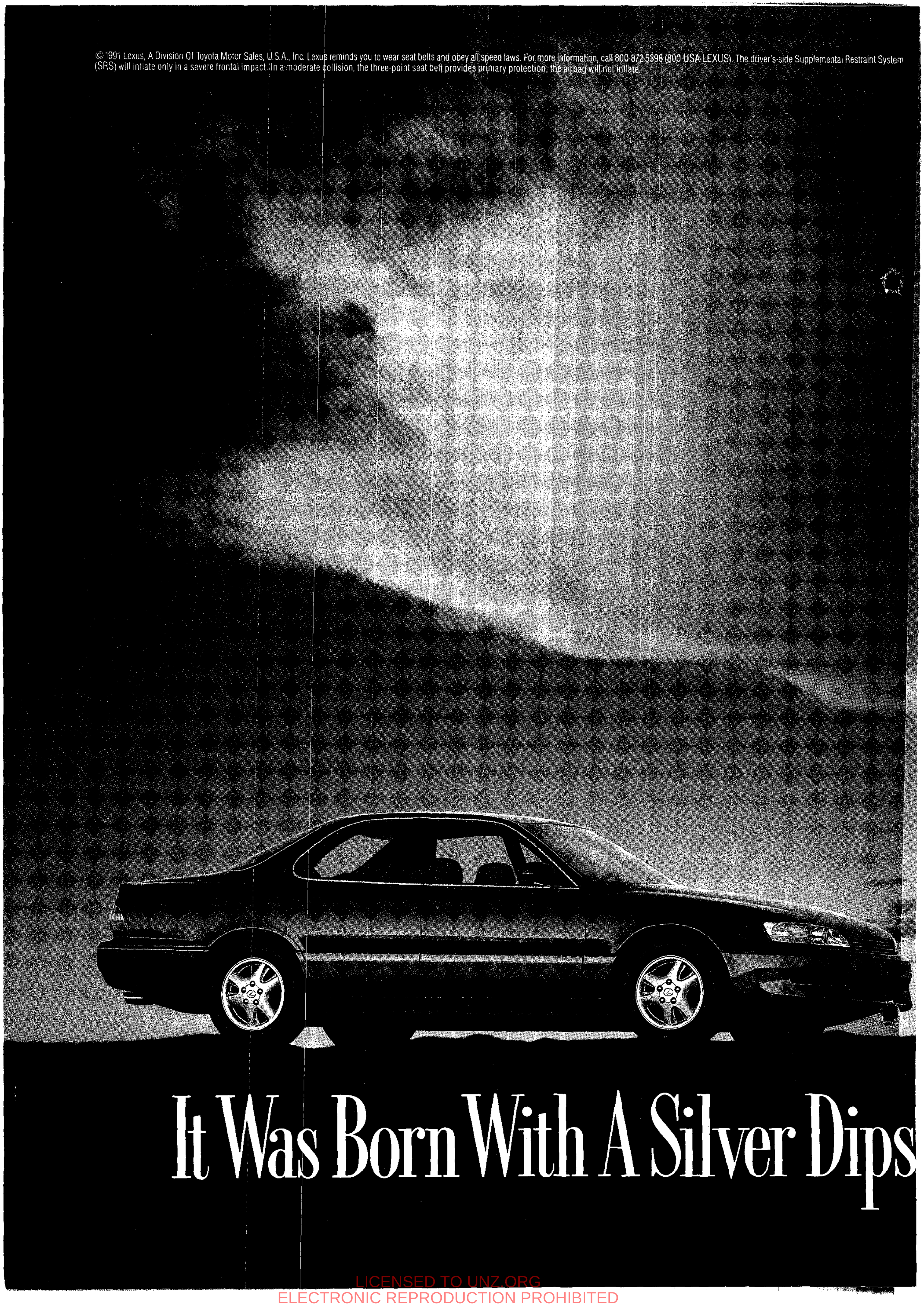

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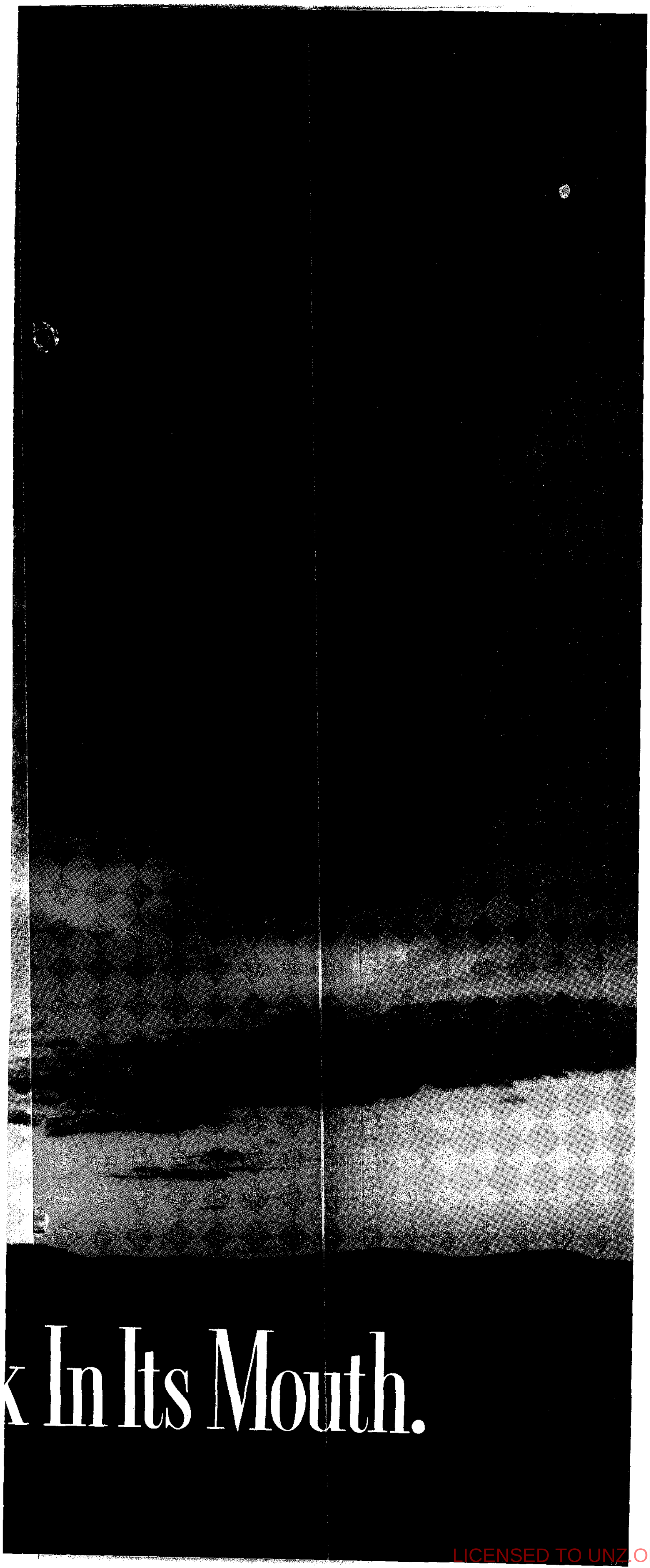

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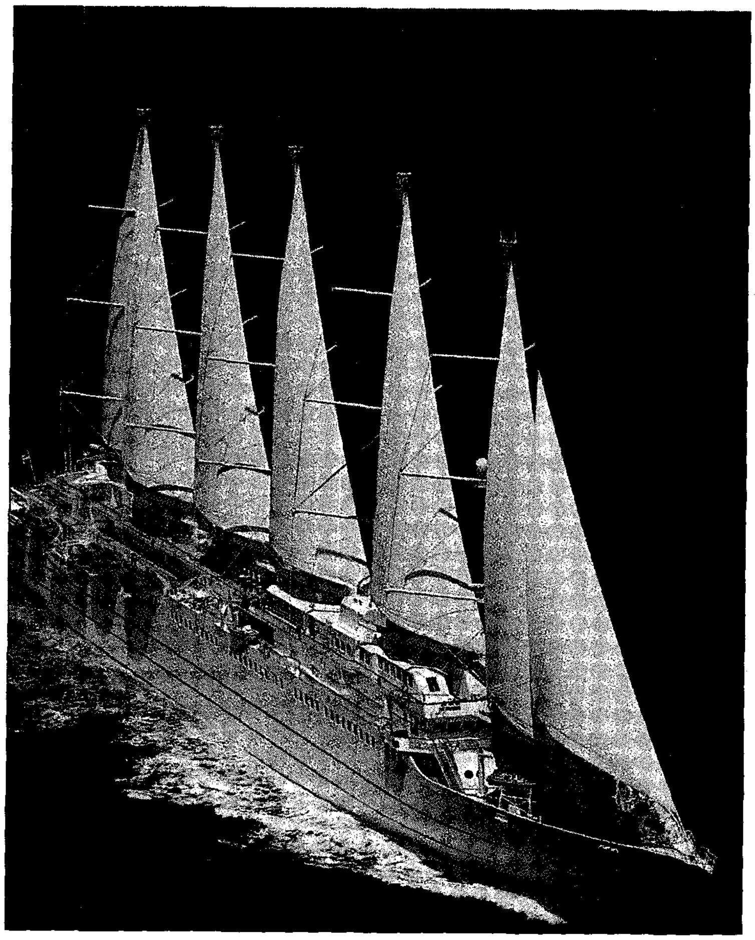

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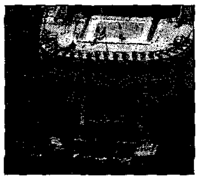

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## THE THEATRE–Cont'd

a Singapore night club, circa 1941, and spill murder and mayhem onto the premises. Unfortunately, the lavish settings (by John Lee Beatty) and the musical talent (led by the winsome and versatile Donna Murphy) cannot conceal a very thin story and a host of excruciatingly bad jokes. Another problem: on a busy night the seating arrangements here can be extremely cramped. (17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. 228-0844.)

**TARTUFFE**—Molière's comedy, in a translation by Donald M. Frame. With Martin LaPlatney, Joanne Camp, and Frank Geraci. Directed by Shepard Sobel. (Pearl, 125 W. 22nd St. 645-7708. Closes Oct. 19.)

**UNIDENTIFIED HUMAN REMAINS AND THE TRUE NATURE OF LOVE**—A new play by the Canadian dramatist Brad Fraser. With Michael Connor, Mark Gregg, Michelle Kronin, Kimberley Pistone, Scott Renderer, Sam Rockwell, and Lenore Zann. (9/30/91) (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.)

**THE WILL ROGERS FOLLIES**—The sets by Tony Walton, the direction and choreography by Tommy Tune, the costumes by Willa Kim, and the row upon row of Ziegfeld girls make a feast for the eyes, but the funny bone and heart are neglected. Keith Carradine makes an engaging, amusing Rogers, but that is not enough, despite Cy Coleman's pleasant score. (5/13/91) (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.)

**YORK THEATRE COMPANY**—The troupe opens its season with Molière's **THE MISANTHROPE**, in a translation by Richard Wilbur. (2 E. 90th St. 534-5366. Closes Oct. 20.)

### LONG RUNS

**CATS:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.). . . **CITY OF ANGELS:** Larry Gelbart, dramatist; Cy Coleman, composer; Billy Byers, arranger; and Michael Blakemore, director, are all in top form in this sharp, jokey musical satire about Hollywood in the forties. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run turned thirty-one in May. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.). . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 1991½:** This newly revised revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it, and wrote the barbed lyrics. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.). . . **FOREVER PLAID:** Stuart Ross's loving tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.). . . **GRAND HOTEL:** The dazzling imagination of Tommy Tune's direction and choreography and the dazzling scenery by Tony Walton almost make up for the inner vacancy of this show, but not quite. The story and characters are skimpy and the music is undistinguished. Nevertheless, there isn't a boring moment. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.). . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.). . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.). . . **ONCE ON THIS ISLAND:** An enchanting musical, set in the Caribbean, by Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.). . . **PERFECT CRIME:** A murder mystery by Warren Manzi. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 695-3401.). . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets, everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.). . . **SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION:** You're best off knowing nothing about the John Guare play other than that it represents a perfect meeting of the playwright and the director Jerry Zaks. Out of a true story—one apparently about celebrity and Good Samaritanism—Guare has fashioned a wistful comedy about race, class, money, imagination, collective conscience, individual psyche, and the impulse toward art. Kelly Bishop now has the lead. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

## DANCE

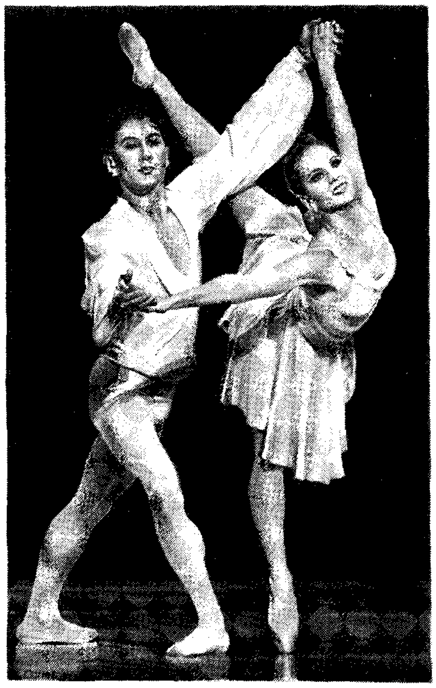
THE recent news of Robert Irving's death, in his native England, at the age of seventy-eight, was not much of a surprise, alas. For the past few years he had been in deteriorating health. Still, the day suddenly seemed to turn dark and sour. We left the office and went up to the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, at Lincoln Center. There, in the Rodgers & Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound, you can listen to LPs of him conducting ballet orchestras on both sides of the Atlantic between the fifties and eighties, and you can hear for yourself the full-bodied splendor and vivacity that the words "Robert Irving, conductor" stand for, especially to those who followed his nearly quarter-century-long collaboration with George Balanchine. We picked out a 1959 Kapp recording of Irving and the New York City Ballet in Bizet's "Symphony in C," and our rocketing joy at hearing this kind of music-making vied with our snowballing sorrow at the thought that we would never again hear it live. It wasn't so much the sensuousness and muscularity of the string section, or the crystalline clarity of the inner voices, or the infallible rhythms, or the intonation, steady and true, that got to us—although all those things were wonderful. It was the way the music sounded as if something irrevocable were being said spontaneously, and for the first and only time.

We asked Arnold Goldberg—a timpanist with City Ballet's orchestra since 1950 and for many years the orchestra's personnel manager—to speak of Irving, a longtime colleague.

"We always thought of him as a musician's musician," Mr. Goldberg said. "He had what we call big ears. He could hear *everything*, like Mr. Balanchine. He was a wizard at making the music sound good. He was also fantastic for dance. As a percussionist, I always used to tell him that he had impeccable rhythm. 'My dear boy,' he would say, 'I was a ballroom dancer.' And he was. He used to dance at dinner parties before he got heavier, and his rhythm was wonderful. When he would lead us in the Gershwin score for 'Who Cares?' he would dance from side to side in the pit. He was also a great sight reader and a fantastic piano player. I remember once, at Saratoga, he was playing for 'Liebeslieder Waltzes.' A heavy downpour came along; rain lashed in over Mr. Irving at the piano. But he didn't miss a beat, and the dancers danced."

**MARTHA GRAHAM DANCE COMPANY**—Opening performances of a two-week engagement that will run through Oct. 20. Oct. 8 at 7:30: "Appalachian Spring," "The Eyes of the Goddess" (première), "El Penitente," and "Maple Leaf Rag.". . .¶ Oct. 9 at 8: "Circe," "El Penitente," "Primitive Mysteries," and "Maple Leaf Rag." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

**SAN FRANCISCO BALLET**—Oct. 1 at 7 and Oct. 6 at 3: The New York premières of "The Comfort Zone," "New Sleep," and "Handel–A Celebration.". . .¶ Oct. 2 at 8 and Oct. 5 at 2 and 8: "Ballo della Regina," "Aurora Polaris" (New York première), and Act III of "The Sleeping Beauty.". . .¶ Oct. 3-4 at 8: "Valses Poeticos" and the New York premières of "Connotations," "Meistens Mozart," and "Haffner Symphony." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)



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*Andre Reyes and Elizabeth Loscavio*

**AMERICAN INDIAN DANCE THEATRE**—Final performances. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Oct. 1-4 at 8; Oct. 5 at 2 and 8; and Oct. 6 at 2 and 7:30.)

**MOISEYEV DANCE COMPANY**—A hundred and fifty folk dancers and musicians. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Oct. 1-4 and Oct. 8-9 at 8; Oct. 5 at 2 and 8; and Oct. 6 at 3. Through Oct. 13.)

## NIGHT LIFE

"WE do the lates and the greats," Ann Rabson, of Saffire (not to be confused with Sa-Fire, the urban popsters), once told a reporter, "the lean and the mean, the howlers and growlers." The Virginia-based trio, whose full name is "Saffire—the Uppity Blues Women," play acoustic blues with remarkable ease and assurance. They recently released their second record, "Hot Flash," and, like their self-titled début, it's full of bracing, roadhouse-style piano and bawdy romps about love and lust. We have only a couple of reservations about Saffire. One is that many of their songs rework the same formulas, so that after half an album the thumping and mugging begin to sound familiar. Another is that the trio's middle-aged-and-proud image sometimes threatens to turn them into a novelty act, and, frankly, they're better than that. (The group's unofficial anthem, "The Middle Aged Blues Boogie," waxes about sex as follows: "An old woman don't yell/And an old woman don't tell/An old woman don't swell/And she's grateful as hell.") Saffire, which also includes Gaye Adegbalola and Earlene Lewis, is best heard live. The trio played nearly two hundred dates last year—theirs is clearly a grass-roots success—and they will be at Delta 88 on October 4.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

**Algonquin Hotel,** 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—The Oak Room recently awoke from its long summer sleep and is now home to **SUSANNAH MC CORKLE.** The jazz-pop singer has come up with an entirely new show since she was last seen here, in December—a tribute to Manhattan singers and songs called "Autumn in New York." Shows, which cover the territory from the vaudeville era to Billy Joel, begin at nine-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, and at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

*Mel Tormé at Michael's Pub*

**Arthur's Tavern,** 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—A quirky, endearing Village watering hole, perpetually decorated for the holidays—all of them. The musicians work in the back of the room, in a well ringed by a bar—a setup that brings out the latent show-biz tendencies in some of the bar's patrons. Mondays belong to the Grove Street Stompers, Tuesdays through Thursdays to Al Bundy, Fridays and Saturdays to Mabel Godwin, and Sundays to Lee Lorenz and the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band. Music from nine-thirty.

**Ballroom,** 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A tony cabaret attained by passing through an opulent tapas restaurant, where wicker baskets overflow with fruit and vegetables and a row of hams hang over the bar; if you haven't had dinner, you may never make it to the show. **RAINIE COLE** is currently holding forth in "Always, Patsy Cline," which had quite a successful nine-month run at Don't Tell Mama some time ago. Cole sings some of Cline's lesser-known material, as well as the late singer's classic "Crazy," "I Fall to Pieces," "Walking After Midnight," and "Sweet Dreams." Shows Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine, Fridays and Saturdays at nine and eleven-fifteen.

**Birdland,** 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—The jazz personnel turns over nearly every night at this airy, loftlike restaurant-bar, in the gray zone between Zabar's and Columbia. Some may cry gentrification at the sight of the pastel walls, the potted greenery, and the bar crowded with Frascati sippers, but the floor-to-ceiling windows make for some fine Broadway-viewing. This week: trumpeter **MANNY DURAN'S** sextet (Oct. 1); Canadian guitarist **PETER LEITCH'S** trio (Oct. 2-3); and **MARK MORGANELLI** and the **JAZZ FORUM ALL-STARS** (Oct. 4-5). Music from nine. Dining.

**Bitter End,** 149 Bleecker St. (673-7030)—For the price of a drink or two, you can catch a handful of bands here any night of the week. (The cover charge is mostly a formality—walk along Bleecker Street and you're sure to have a free pass handed to you.) In the old days, as a mural behind the bar attests, the club hosted the likes of Bob Dylan, Linda Ronstadt, and Joni Mitchell. Now you're not likely to recognize anyone onstage unless you went to high school with them. Music from eight Sundays through Thursdays, and from nine on Fridays and Saturdays.

**Blue Note,** 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—A jazz club that would be a perfect stop on a bus tour (there's even a souvenir shop that sells Kodak). It's a good idea to make a reservation and show up well in advance. The husband-and-wife team of **CLEO LAINE** and **JOHN DANKWORTH**—she's a gifted, operatic alto, he's a reed player and her longtime musical director—can be found here Oct. 1-6. The buttery pop-jazz-blues guitarist and vocalist **GEORGE BENSON** begins a stint on Oct. 8, with the **COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA.** First set at nine. Dining.

**Bottom Line,** 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—A big, pleasant room where they pack them in until someone says uncle. The walls and columns are basic black with some rainbow detailing here and there—the place looks a little like the outside of a van. If you end up without a seat, you can stand at the bar—finally a club where they don't force you to drink—and mull over photographs from great shows you've missed. Oct. 2 belongs to **ALLEN GINSBERG, RAY MANZAREK,** and **MICHAEL MC CLURE** (at seven-thirty and ten-thirty), and Oct. 4-5 to **CHRISTINE LAVIN** and **VANCE GILBERT** (at eight and eleven). Burgers, fries, and other things to make your heart beat faster.

**Bradley's,** 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A neighborhood bar in the heart of N.Y.U. country. It's advisable to get all your talking done between sets, because once the first chord is struck the audience here—with a little help from the management—becomes as quiet as a church congregation. The **JESSE DAVIS** quartet is here through Oct. 5. Music from nine-forty-five. Dining.

**Café Sin-é,** 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—An unpretentious storefront café devoted to such things as Irish stew and the *Irish Times*. There's no stage per se, but bohemian musicians gather around a piano and work up some nice, wistful sets while bohemian patrons sit writing in journals, rolling cigarettes, or lingering over one of the two varieties of beer sold here: Budweiser and Rolling Rock. The café is a nice place to while away an hour, and you never know who'll turn up and tune up. Music generally begins at about eight-thirty.

**Carlyle Hotel,** Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, pastel murals, and, beginning Oct. 1, the refined, smoky alto of **KAREN AKERS.** Ms. Akers, an introspective balladeer and an actress whose Broadway credits include "Nine" and "Grand Hotel," will be presenting material from her recently released album, "Unchained Melody." Sets at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty Tuesdays through Saturdays. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans' Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** presides at the piano beginning Oct. 1, from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Saturdays.

**Condon's,** 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—Jazz clubs aren't always known for their romantic atmosphere, but Condon's earns higher marks than most. It's a low-ceilinged basement establishment, with lemon walls and abundant candlelight. They rearranged the furniture here a while back, so that now a greater number of people look at the stage rather than at a pole. **JERRY GONZALEZ** and the Fort Apache Band are in swing Oct. 1-6. Condon's All-Stars—a be-bop group made up of **CLIFFORD JORDAN, JIMMY HEATH, ROLAND HANNA,** and others—commences work on Oct. 8. Music after nine.

**Continental Divide,** 25 Third Ave., at St. Marks Pl. (529-6924)—An agreeable bar located not far from the gateway to St. Marks Place and frequented by the same eclectic city population: hipsters, posers, N.Y.U. students, and the occasional skinhead. The motif is prehistoric punk—a Stone Age mural, assorted toy dinosaurs and pterodactyls—and there's a small stage in the corner. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at ten, Fridays and Saturdays at eleven.

**Delta 88,** 332 Eighth Ave., at 26th St. (924-3499)—A tin-roofed, hubcap-awninged, soul-food-serving, chicken-shack theme bar. Exhibits include a rusted Orange Crush sign, a Pat Boone record jacket, bottle caps spelling out "Welcome," and other peckerwood flotsam. (If this place weren't a restaurant, it could be a flea market.) The clientele is mainly Northern urban. There's live music most nights, including gospel on Mondays and zydeco on Thursdays. **SAFFIRE—THE UPPITY BLUES WOMEN** will perform on Oct. 4. Shows after nine. Chicken-fried steak, deep-fried crawdads (a.k.a. Cajun popcorn), and other exotic Southern fare.

**Diva,** 306 E. 81st St. (650-1928)—A newly hatched restaurant and piano bar. It's a modest-sized room that offers Italian fare and, Tuesdays through Saturdays, the musings of pianist **CHARLES DE FOREST.** Music from eight-thirty. Closed Sundays.

**Duplex,** 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—A two-floor entertainment center. The cheery white downstairs bar has French windows giving on to the bustle of Seventh Avenue, but the real clamor is indoors. Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. Pop standards are sung/shouted, usually with altered, risqué lyrics; wisecracks are fired across the room; and everyone laughs too hard. Upstairs there's a quieter bar and a cabaret, where you'll find a variety of performers nightly.

**Eighty Eight's,** 228 W. 10th St. (924-0088)—For four weeks, beginning on Oct. 4, the upstairs of this Village night spot will host **SYLVIA SYMS,** who'll be presenting favorites from her long and distinguished career in the clubs. A graduate of the Carol Channing School of Enunciation, Ms. Syms runs little risk of being tapped for a "Hooked on Phonics" commercial, and at this point you'd need a yardstick to measure her vibrato. But the spirit and the pacing remain right on target, and the intimate scale of Eighty Eight's would seem custom-made for her expressive style. Pianist Fred Hersch and tenor-sax player Loren Schoenberg assist. Shows begin Fridays and Saturdays at eight-thirty and Sundays at four.

**Fat Tuesday's,** 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—The seating arrangement in this long, narrow, red-velvet-and-mirror-walled basement makes flying coach seem roomy; nevertheless, it's one of the city's top jazz spots—thanks largely to the club's talent bookers. But watch your head. **BOBBY WATSON AND VICTOR LEWIS'S HORIZON** is on hand Oct. 1-6. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL** leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

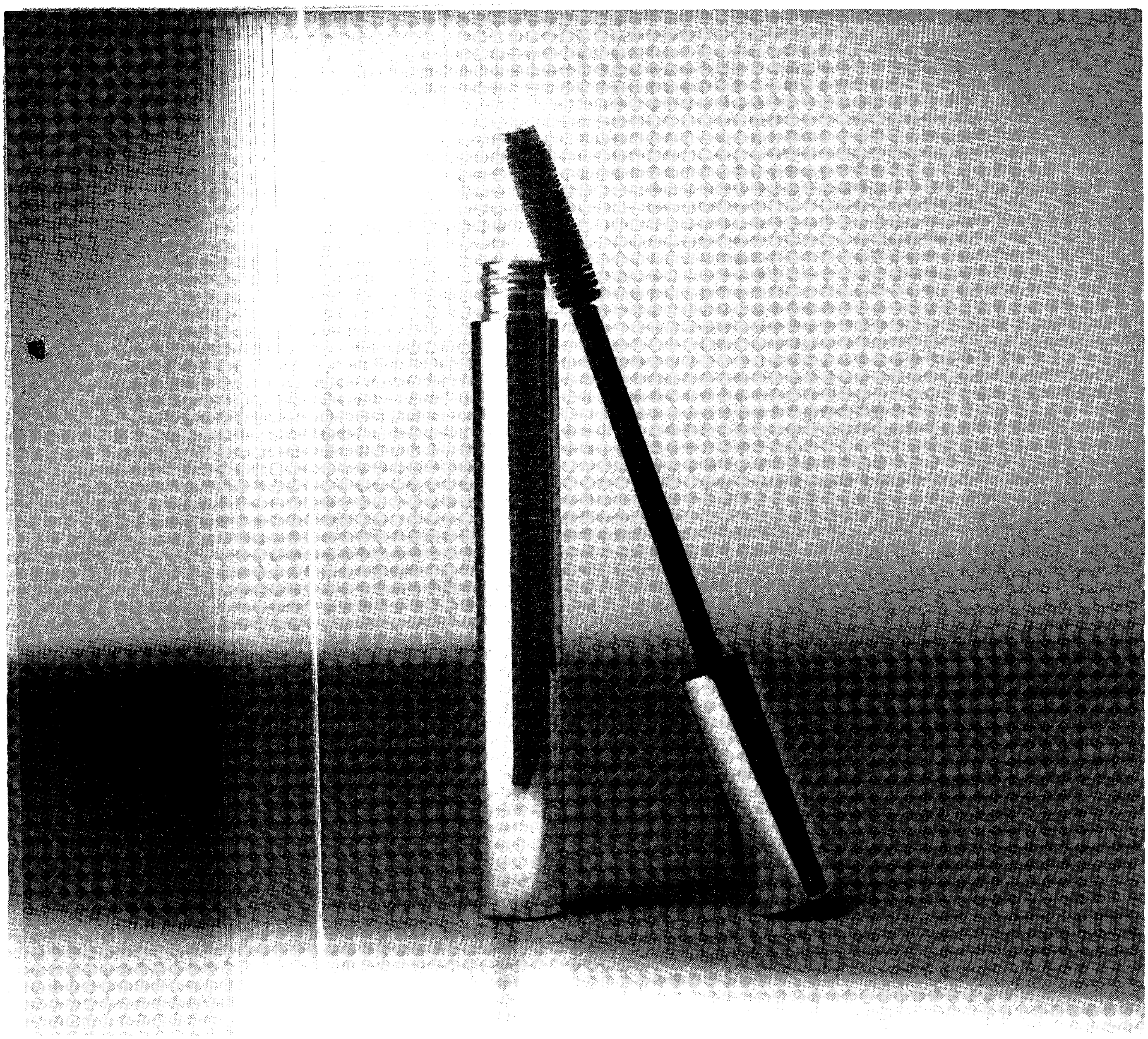
**Knickerbocker,** 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Brass rails, vintage posters, Hirschfeld drawings, a menu full of items like bangers and mash, and a piano. Knickerbocker's is an airy, good-spirited place and, while music often takes a back seat to conversation, some able piano-and-bass teams turn up regularly. Pianist **JOHN HICKS,** who'll be here with **MICKEY BASS** Oct. 2-5, has been remarkably productive in the last year or so. Aside from releasing his first solo album, Hicks can be heard on new albums by Gary Bartz, David Murray, Roy Hargrove, and Peter Leitch. Music from nine-forty-five.

**Ludlow Street Café,** 165 Ludlow St. (353-0536)—A modest below-stairs room that looks like a slightly spruced-up tenement-building apartment. There's cheap Ecuadoran food, a Greater East Village crowd, and, every Monday night, **BEAT RODEO,** a straight-shooting bar band that plays a mix of country, blues, Dylan, Byrds, the Velvets, and various pop curiosities. Sets at eleven.

**Manny's Car Wash,** 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—A bright spot on the little-heralded Upper East Side club scene. Don't go expecting to be sprayed with soapy water and massaged by large brushes: the sign outside is the only car-wash reference. Inside, the place looks like an adman's idea of a blues bar. **HUBERT SUMLIN,** a longtime guitarist for Howlin' Wolf's band, is appearing on Oct. 3. Sets from nine-fifteen, except on Sundays, when shows begin at eight.

**Marquee,** 547 W. 21st St. (929-3257)—The current front-runner on the alternative-music scene. The **MEAT PUPPETS,** who'll be here on Oct. 5, are an Arizona trio whose first album, a self-titled exercise in thrash, was released in 1981. Since then, the band has made some pretty fair stabs at uniting country and punk and has crept a little closer to the mainstream. The show starts at nine.

**Michael's Pub,** 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—A midtown restaurant and jazz lair for the tasselled-loafers set. The dark, sombre bar (carved-wood lions, iron grillwork) looks like a place you'd find in London's financial district; the dining room—putting-green car-



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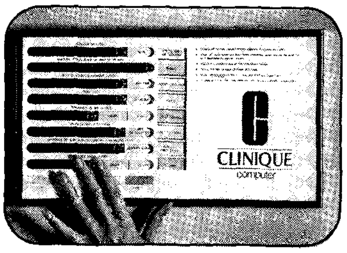

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pet, lime-green leather banquettes—has more of a country-club feel. **MEL TORMÉ** wraps up an engagement here on Oct. 6. On Oct. 8, Stan Freeman moves in with a one-man musical depiction of Oscar Levant. Mondays are reserved for the New Orleans Funeral and Ragtime Orchestra, with Woody Allen on clarinet. Show times vary.

**RAINBOW & STARS**, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—Not to be confused with its richer cousin, the Rainbow Room, which is just down the hall. There you'll find expansive Art Deco glitter, here intimate nineties glitter. The performers, with their backs to the window, have to compete with a view of the Hudson, the George Washington Bridge, and beyond. **LESLEY GORE**, whose 1963 hit "It's My Party" made her a very, very famous sixteen-year-old, starts a month-long engagement here on Oct. 1. Gore has not appeared in New York for over a decade, and her performances are sure to include the aforementioned number, as well as the hits "Judy's Turn to Cry" and "You Don't Own Me." Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Mondays.

**RED BLAZER TOO**, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—A place where a fella and a gal can put on the feedbag, get a little tight, and cut a rug. The music is in a traditional vein—ragtime, swing, Chicago-style, or big bands, depending on the night. Show times vary.

**RUSSIAN TEA ROOM**, 150 W. 57th St. (265-0947)—Home to a small, nicely appointed, red-gold-and-green cabaret. **BLOSSOM DEARIE** (of the muted, wispy voice) will be singing here on Oct. 6. Shows Sundays at eight and ten-thirty. Dining and, of course, drinking.

**SWEET BASIL**, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—An itinerary stop for the international jazz groupies who, on any given night, can be seen roaming the streets of the Village. Up front, there's a glass-enclosed sidewalk café; in back is a larger room, with a pressed-tin ceiling, red brick, and more pinewood than a ski lodge. A trio consisting of **OLIVER JONES, ED THIGPEN**, and **RUFUS REID** is holding forth here through Oct. 6; pianist **MAL WALDRON**, who recently released an album with Steve Lacy, leads a quintet here as of Oct. 8. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter Miles Evans is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

**TRAMPS**, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Located on a Chelsea block that's like an urban Disneyland (Chelsea Billiards, an indoor miniature-golf course, a trendy all-night diner, Limelight around the corner), this roller-rink-size bar-and-restaurant is a lot bigger and a lot slicker than the old Tramps, but the emphasis on solid rock and blues remains. **WALTER (WOLFMAN) WASHINGTON** will be performing here Oct. 3-5. Music from eight on weeknights and from eight-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

**VILLAGE VANGUARD**, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The late Max Gordon, who opened this holiest of jazz shrines in 1935, once described the club's early patrons as a mix of "poets, W.P.A. writers, hustlers, broads on the make, and moochers." **VINCENT HERRING'S** quintet claims Oct. 1-6; a foursome led by **JAY HOGGARD** (a vibraphonist who happens to also be Mayor Dinkins' son-in-law) gets under way on Oct. 8. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays. Music after nine-thirty.

**WETLANDS**, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Two floors of no-nuke veggie entertainment and consciousness-raising. Listen to bands play in the Summer of Love-muralled back room; buy a tie-dyed T-shirt at the Volkswagen-bus curio shop; catch up on current events at the bulletin board and community calendar. Or, if you'd rather just be mellow, crash out in the basement hippie love pad. **BABA OLATUNJI AND HIS DRUMS OF PASSION** will be here on Oct. 5. Olatunji, a percussionist who was born in Nigeria, came to the U.S. in the fifties and has since become a widely known performer and teacher of African drumming. A curious footnote: he also wrote the score for "Raisin in the Sun." Shows from ten.

**ZINNO**, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—One of those snazzy, awninged eateries you've seen nestled amid brownstones in the Village and always wondered about. **PETE MALINVERNI, DENNIS IRWIN**, and **VERNEL FOURNIER** can be heard through Oct. 5. Music from seven on Sundays, and from eight every other night.

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## PERCHES

*The eight ornate eighteenth- and nineteenth-century birdcages on display at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum (Fifth Avenue at 91st Street) are architectural snapshots of another age, according to David McFadden, the museum's curator of decorative arts. A cage from Holland, for example, is peppered with little pointy bumps, typical of Dutch handiwork of the time; a Biedermeier-style cage, which looks like a mantel clock, is inlaid with shiny mahogany veneers; a French cage is replete with neoclassical gilded garlands; and a Rialto-bridge cage is a weathered-green color exactly right for Venice. Part of a collection of decorative objects that Eleanor and Sarah Hewitt chose when they were assembling the museum in the late eighteen-hundreds and early nineteen-hundreds, the cages hark back to an age when decorative details were highly prized.*

*The cages are made of wire, painted wood, metal, and, in at least one case, blown glass. Some of them are tributes to hoped-for inhabitants: the Dutch cage sports a "coat of arms," as if it were intended for an aristocratic bird, Mr. McFadden said, and a cage modelled on a Swiss chalet includes a bird-size deer's head above the door. But despite the fact that the Dutch creation, for example, has little glass feeders, it's hard to imagine birds living in these cages. They seem unlikely places for soiled newspapers, rejected birdseed, and friendly squawking. Mr. McFadden said he isn't bothered by the cages' impractical aspects. "I can appreciate them historically, as part of the history of decorative art, but I find the idea of a caged animal unpleasant."*

## EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

IF you could drive a Lamborghini on the San Diego freeway as fast as L.A. goes through clubs, it might actually make sense to buy one. It's not enough that almost all the dens of the moment (and nowhere is the term den more apt) are one-night-per-week affairs. Local trendgevity rarely exceeds a baker's dozen. "We're too fickle," says Glenn, our guide for the night, as he stands in the middle of Sin-A-Matic, which, if it still exists by the time this is published, on Saturdays takes over an old, beat-up club called Peanuts, which is situated along an unfashionable strip of Santa Monica Boulevard. "Actually, we're really just too bored. If these kids weren't so tired of themselves they wouldn't look like this." No buoyant beach nuts here. Nor is there any East Coast-ennui emulation. This is London without slam dancing. If you can't count your piercings and tattoos on two hands, then you must have got lost on your way to Magic Mountain. Tanlines? These kids look as if orange juice has never passed their lips. "SOS [same old stuff]," says Glenn. "Let's go."

We head to Truth, in the Park Plaza, a hotel ballroom that has had more revivals than Liza Minnelli's film career. Three rooms, incredible music, and slides being projected on balloons almost as big as L.A.'s Cinerama Dome. The fire department closes the place down at 3:15 A.M. All rèvved up with no place to go, Glenn's friend Jeff explains, "L.A. treats clubs the same way it treats movies. One opens, everyone goes to see it a couple of times if it's good, then it plays for the suburbs and leaves to make room for a new show."

On Sunday, we go to Spice, as in "He who controls the spice controls the universe." But no matter how crowded this new club is, it's doubtful the promoters will ever achieve any such cosmic sway along this klieg-spotted dune in the galaxy. "It's fun tonight," says Glenn. "This is definitely the most crowded it's been since it opened. So this will probably be its last night." How can he be so sure? "I can't really. Just a hunch. But I'll tell you one thing: I won't be here."

## IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

**NEXT WAVE FESTIVAL**—Sept. 30 at 7, Oct. 1-4 at 8, and Oct. 5 at 3 and 8: Eric Bass/ Sandglass Theatre in "Invitation to Heaven," a work with puppets. . . . ¶ Sept. 30 and Oct. 2-5 at 8: "Palermo, Palermo," by Pina Bausch Tanztheater Wuppertal. . . . ¶ Oct. 8-9 at 7: "Bandoneon," also by Pina Bausch. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. The festival continues through Dec. 7.)

**"BRACE UP!"**—A presentation, loosely based on Chekhov's "Three Sisters," by the Wooster Group, with music, video, and performance. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651. Thursdays through Sundays at 8. Through Oct. 26.)

**JOHN KELLY**—The singing performance artist in a short engagement. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Oct. 3-6 at 8:30. For information about tickets, call 529-2318.)

**"Celestial Alphabet Event"**—An opera-theatre work by Adrienne Weiss and Carter Burwell. With Joan Cusack and eight others. (One Dream, 232 West Broadway. Oct. 3-6 and Oct. 8-10, all at 8. For reservations, call 219-1160.)

**Pomo Afro Homos**—A performance group from San Francisco. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Oct. 3-5 at 8 and Oct. 6 at 3. Through Oct. 13.)

**Hsin Fu Hsuan Puppet Theatre**—Marionettes, basically. (Taipei Theatre, 1221 Sixth Ave., at 48th St., Concourse Level 2. 373-1800. Oct. 4-5 and Oct. 7-11, all at 7:30.)

**"Snow"**—An evening-length work by Ping Chong. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. Oct. 7 at 8. For information about tickets, call 353-4195.)

**P.S. 122**—Oct. 3-6 at 8: William Pope L. in "The Aunt Jenny Chronicles/Journey to Incontinence." . . . ¶ Oct. 3-6 at 9: Viveca Vazquez. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

## ART

Guillermo Kuitca's installation at MOMA (through October 29) is not an installation in the currently fashionable sense, which was refreshing—especially given the microclimate of the "Projects" room. Kuitca, who is thirty and grew up in Buenos Aires, is the child of a psychoanalyst. He looks like an old-fashioned music prodigy nervously making his transition into a tougher world, and his early paintings—stagy, scratchy, febrile scenes of puerile angst, such as the tellingly titled "Nadie Olvida Nada" ("Nobody Forgets Anything") from 1982—suggest the jittery lines of Kafka, Kokoschka, and Giacometti. Typically, these paintings evoke a dark and cavernous room in which a small, single, tightly made bed stands ominously empty. A lone figure, primitively drawn—Mommy? the Inquisitor?—might be positioned elsewhere in the room. The melodrama in these early-eighties works (one is included in this show) reflects the artist's involvement with theatre (he has written and directed plays in Argentina) as well as his avowed admiration for Francis Bacon. But, most of all, the paintings suggest some autobiographical connection to the past, whether that be the artist's own childhood, his family's history, or a larger cultural tree.

Maps—of the area around Odessa, for example, where Kuitca's grandparents were from—have been a frequent refrain since 1987, along with the recurring blueprint of a four-room house. On view, for instance, are three of Kuitca's paintings with the house-plan motif, one of which appears to be weeping. There is also a group of five foreshortened cots, freestanding, with maps painted on their mattresses. These recall Robert Gober's beds from a few years back, but without invoking perversity and wryness. What is most engaging, in fact, about Kuitca is his tentative quality. His work is emotionally delicate even when confessional, and when it's political it remains personal as well. A sensitive young artist.

## MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

**Metropolitan Museum,** Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Seurat." A centenary exhibition of more than two hundred paintings and drawings by the Pointillist. . . . ¶ "Neo-Impressionism: The Friends and Followers of Georges Seurat," best taken as a kind of appetizer before the main course, consists of eighty-eight paintings, drawings, and watercolors by Paul Signac, Camille Pissarro, Henri Matisse, and many others. . . . ¶ The exhibition of the Annenberg Collection begins with some exquisite small works by Fantin-Latour, followed by two rooms, devoted to Monet, van Gogh, Gauguin, and Cézanne, that include some of the collection's finest works, such as Monet's "Poppy Field, Argenteuil" (1875), Gauguin's "The Siesta" (1892-94), and Cézanne's "The House with the Cracked Walls" (1892-94). Farther on are some very good early-twentieth-century works, including Picasso's haunting "At the Lapin Agile" (1905), an important but somewhat overwrought Vuillard, a beautiful Matisse, and a very pretty Bonnard. Through Oct. 13. . . . **Note:** The museum's roof garden, planted with nine sculptures by Rodin, is open when the weather permits. Through Oct. 27. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

**Museum of Modern Art,** 11 W. 53rd St.—"Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort" explores the contemporary photographer's supposed preoccupation with the life of the home. Included are more than a hundred and fifty works by Nan Goldin, William Eggleston, Cindy Sherman, Tina Barney, and others. Dec. 31. . . . ¶ An exhibition of works by Guillermo Kuitca is the latest in the "Projects" series. Through Oct. 29. . . . ¶ "Nudes," a show of fifty photographs by Lee Friedlander taken over the past twelve years. Through Oct. 8. . . . ¶ Forty helmets and masks made in the twentieth century. Through Nov. 19. . . . ¶ A small show of videotapes made with inexpensive video equipment by such artists as William Wegman, Linda Montano, George Kuchar, and Sadie

"East of Suez"

John Wilkie Beal, Sr.

Hudson River Artist

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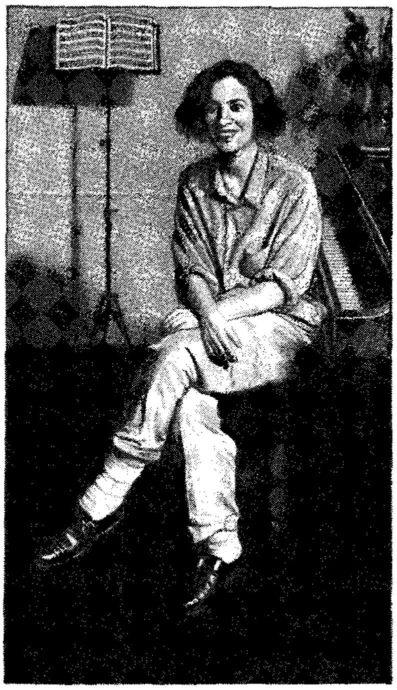
## ART–Cont'd

Benning. Through Nov. 10. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

**Guggenheim Museum,** Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed for renovation until early 1992.



*Barbara Bloom*

**Whitney Museum of American Art,** Madison Ave. at 75th St.— Among the punchiest and freshest-looking paintings in "American Life in American Art" are Paul Cadmus's flamboyantly tawdry "Sailors and Floosies" (1938), Grant Wood's subtly colored triptych "Study for Breaking the Prairie" (1935-39), and George Tooker's creepy and hilarious "The Subway" (1950). . . .¶ A retrospective of John Baldessari's work that has been organized into eight loosely chronological rooms. Through Oct. 20. (Open Tuesdays, 1 to 8; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, 11 to 6.)

**Brooklyn Museum,** Eastern Parkway—A thirty-foot-long platform of forged-iron sculptures is the fifteenth installment in Alain Kirili's "Commandment" series. . . .¶ "Quattrocento," a small exhibition of a few dozen early-Renaissance panel paintings from Italy, shows off another of the many fine corners of the museum's vast collection. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

**Morgan Library,** 29 E. 36th St.—The library reopens on Oct. 1 with greatly improved interior spaces. The Morgan House (at 37th and Madison) has been purchased, and a glass-enclosed garden court constructed to connect the two buildings. The permanent collection is now given two new gallery spaces and will be shown off in "Masterpieces of the Morgan Library." (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

**National Academy of Design,** Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The French children's-book character Babar the Elephant travels to New York in the form of more than a hundred drawings and watercolors by Jean de Brunhoff, the character's creator, and his son Laurent, who has continued the stories. Through Nov. 3. (Open Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

*Robert Barry*

**The New Museum,** 583 Broadway—"The Interrupted Life." There are only a few good works of art in this show about death, most notably two silk-screen paintings made by Andy Warhol almost thirty years ago. Warhol's montage of four grieving Jackie Kennedys and his electric chair have become icons of America's deadly obsession with celebrity and of its equation of justice with death. Much of the remaining work in this ambitious but somewhat misdirected display is concerned with a sensationalistic view of death—cadavers, autopsies, and the like. Apart from the Warhols, the most affecting works are the documentary ones—anonymous nineteenth-century family photographs of dead loved ones, many posed as if they were alive, and a riveting five-hour-plus documentary by Frederick Wiseman, in which hospital workers discuss death from a variety of medical angles. Although the show does feature several other compelling moments, including works by Sarah Charlesworth and Adam Fuss, in general the more arty the work in this show tries to be, the more forthright, the sillier, and, curiously, the more narcissistic it is. The most existential art of the past several decades has been nonrepresentational, but nowhere here is abstraction explored. The catalogue contains a number of interesting essays, but unfortunately, owing to its design, it is nearly unreadable. Through Dec. 29. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, noon to 8.)

**New-York Historical Society,** 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—Forty watercolors of New York and New Jersey landscapes by William Rickarby Miller (1818-93). Through Nov. 17. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 5.)

**Queens Museum of Art,** Flushing Meadow Park—Fifty photographs, by Reginald Marsh, that depict New York's subways and Coney Island, and that were used by the artist as studies for his better-known paintings and drawings. Through Nov. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

**Studio Museum in Harlem,** 144 W. 125th St.—Sixty-three narrative canvases painted by Jacob Lawrence between 1938 and 1940. Through Nov. 10. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

## GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 *or 11 to between 5 and 6.)*

**A. R. Penck / David Smith** (1906-65)—Penck, who was born in 1939 in what would become East Germany, came of age artistically during the sixties and soon adopted the "allover" painting style pioneered by artists of David Smith's generation—a look that was virtually synonymous with America, and was thus subversive for an artist of Penck's age in the East. While many of his signifiers have by now of course been preëmpted, Penck's pictorial language—almost a private pictographic code—nonetheless remains the same. One handsome 1990 painting titled "Io e Petra a Nord" ("Me and Petra to the North") includes the arcadian image of a latter-day Adam and Eve, forcefully inflected with emerald-green strokes, and which now conveys a whole new kind of message: that Penck may be our new Jean Dubuffet. / Quick and graphic black-and-white drawings on paper, made between 1953 and 1961. Smith's lines are improvisational—associative, to be sure, but nonreferential and decidedly "free" in the venerable bohemian sense. Through Oct. 5. (Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. Open Mondays.)

**Short List—francesco clemente,** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. (through Nov. 16); **alan feltus,** Forum, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St. (through Oct. 26); **nancy fried,** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. (through Nov. 2); **don van vliet,** Werner, 21 E. 67th St. *(through Oct. 26).*

## GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

**Donald Judd**—A rich show of new sculptures made of all the familiar Judd materials—wood, Plexiglas, anodized aluminum, and Corten steel. What comes across most strongly is the sensuousness of these materials. In multi-unit works Judd combines the deep-red rust of Corten steel with yellow enamel paint, or satiny Douglas fir plywood with midnight-blue and oxide-red Plexiglas. Every piece is gorgeous, yet the exhibition as a whole is not the kind of accumulative installation at which the artist excels—groupings in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Through Oct. 19. (Pace, 3[illegible] E. 57th St.)

**Short List—robert barry,** Holly Solomon, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (open Mondays, through Oct. 12); **leonard baskin,** Midtown-Payson, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Oct. 26); **byron browne,** Rosenfeld, 50 W. 57th St. (through Oct. 26); **pol bury,** Herstand, 24 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through Nov. 9); **john button,** Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. (through Oct. 5); **philip guston,** McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Oct. 19); **rebecca horn,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. (open Mondays through Oct. 19); **marc lambrechts,** De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St. (through Oct. 19); **man ray,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. (through Oct. 12); **wallace putnam,** Ross, 50 W. 57th St. (through Nov. 9); **mark tobey,** Daverio, 41 E. 57th St. (through Oct. 26); **bettina werner,** Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St. (through Oct. 12).

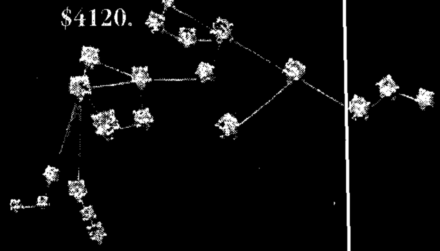
## GALLERIES—SoHo

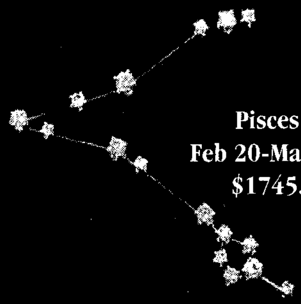
**Barbara Bloom**—This installation, titled "The Tip of the Iceberg," reaches from the ocean floor to outer space in a critique of consumer culture and our relationship to junk. It includes such things as a table heaped with replicas of the china used on the Titanic and a cupola surrounded by a porthole frieze festooned with duplicates of some of the things that have been accidentally left behind in outer space by various teams of astronauts. Accompanying the installation are three bound books: a volume listing in vague detail each of the thousands of pieces of junk left free-floating in space; an account of the sinking of the Titanic and the subsequent rescue; and a list of names of all the stars that have been "adopted" through the International Star Registry. Through Oct. 12. (Gorney, 100 Greene St.)

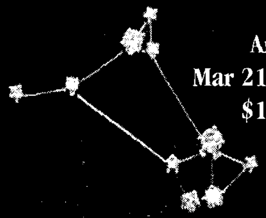
**Mel Bochner**—Bochner, like his former wife Dorothea Rockburne, holds a place in the short history of conceptualism for presenting art as a series of simple mathematical propositions that trigger philosophical, theoretical, and aesthetic thoughts. This exhibition, which consists of a straight strip of black tape divided into thirty-six-inch segments and set around the perimeter of the gallery space, is a re-creation of a 1969 work. It is being presented as "a pivotal point in the history of contemporary art because it fuses Conceptual and Minimal art practices." Despite such claims, there has often been a dryness to Bochner's work, which makes him something of an acquired taste. This piece is an exception, though for reasons that may be somewhat accidental. Through Oct. 19. (SteinGladstone, 99 Wooster St.)

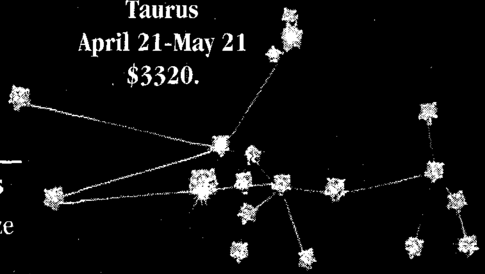
**Gandy Brodie** (1925-75)—A strong show of crusty, many-layered painter's paintings with various recurring images—a flower and a diagonal ridge, for example. Through [illegible]t. 12. (Thorp, 103 Prince St.)

**Petah Coyne**—Suspended from the ceiling in the main gallery here are three large, powerful sculptures, which all combine a child's sense of wonder with a profound sense of horror. The works are made of ravelled and fragmented chicken wire, and each one is a somewhat sexual, somewhat menacing black organic form with a tattered skirt of silver. The works are resolute and incomplete, and, even though they hang untethered, they are about stillness. Through Oct. 12. (Shainman, 560 Broadway. . . . ¶ In a companion show, there is a series of bulbous, all-black works, most of them male, as opposed to the skirted female ones at Shainman. But the female is represented here as well: in a small room by itself is a sculpture of delicately spreading lacy strands of thin wire, suggesting the


**Aquarius**
Jan 21-Feb 19
$4120.


**Pisces**
Feb 20-Mar 20
$1745.


**Aries**
Mar 21-April 20
$1620.


**Taurus**
April 21-May 21
$3320.

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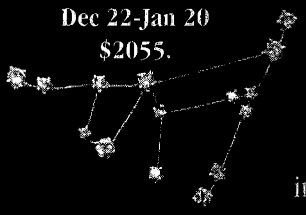
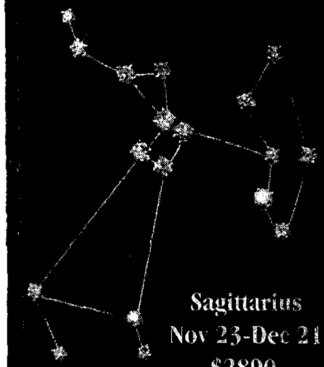
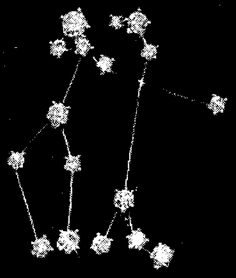

**Capricorn**
Dec 22-Jan 20
$2055.


**Sagittarius**
Nov 23-Dec 21
$2890.


**Gemini**
May 22-June 21
$3175.

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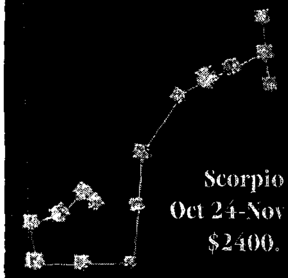
| A Comet | $1720. | Southern Cross | $1560. |
| Cygnus | $1830. | Ursa Major | $1595. |
| Ursa Minor | $1070. | | |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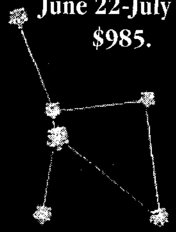
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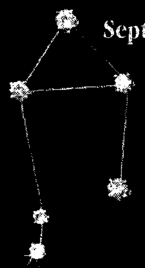
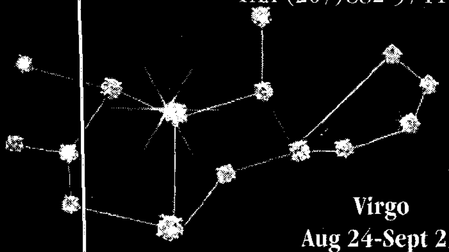

**Libra**
Sept 24-Oct 23
$1285.


**Virgo**
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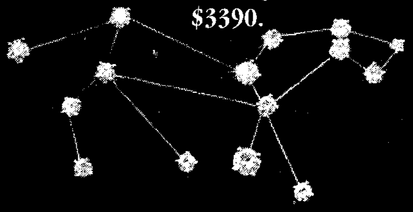
$3235.


**Leo**
July 24-Aug 23
$3390.

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## ART–Cont'd

Sugar Plum Fairy after a collision with the Queen of the Night. Through Oct. 19. (Brown, 23 Watts St.)

**Jim Dine**—This former practitioner of Pop seems to have awakened from a long sleep, filled with dreams of hearts, trees, and the Venus de Milo, and entered with an exhilarating vengeance into a dialogue with art other than his own. The high point of this rich show is a series of recent sculptures which take on themes of myth, labor, and mortality, sometimes with imagery that satirically places Dine in a symbolically victorious position above other artists represented by the Pace gallery. (A piece called "Wheat Fields" is iconographically rich in this regard.) In a number of works Dine seems to lampoon the ambition of Schnabel while at the same time accepting the upstart's challenge. "Twins in the Forest" makes direct reference to the equally larger-than-life Georg Baselitz: in a sly and hilarious act of aesthetic conquest, Dine has made two massive hacked-wood figures, à la Baselitz, festooned with all sorts of things, from farm tools to a bronze heart, attached with huge body-piercing pins. Through Oct. 26. (Pace, 142 Greene St.)

**Piero Gilardi**—"Inveronimile" ("Beyond Belief"). After a twelve-year hiatus, this fringe practitioner of Arte Povera is back with a wonderfully weird interactive light-sound-and-smoke installation that takes place in a kinetic grape arbor. In a carefully orchestrated twelve-minute program, the arbor goes through a full cycle—from night to day and back again—during which viewers can control various light and sound effects by pressing lit leaves. The arbor is like an Italian version of the talking forest in the "Wizard of Oz": at various points in the cycle armlike vines do an undulating wiggle and the tops of the trees spin around frenetically, opening to reveal grapes within. But the piece's visual whimsicality is undercut by some sinister sound effects, such as car crashes in the "morning" and machine-gun fire in the "afternoon." Also on view are several "Nature Carpets" of the sort the artist exhibited in the sixties. Through Oct. 12. (Sperone Westwater, 121 Greene St.)

**Zero Mostel** (1915-77) **and Tobias Mostel**—Zero Mostel, one of America's foremost comic actors (he was the original Tevye), also tried his hand at painting; his son is a painter, too. Zero's paintings are a derivative cross between the magical Surrealism of Marc Chagall and the fractured social realism of Jack Levine. Tobias, on the other hand, seems to divide his time between cartoonish soft-core-porn pastels and large ceramic towers with oversexed versions of famous art-historical nudes. Father seems to have taken his art seriously; son—not. Through Oct. 5. (Bustamante, 560 Broadway.)

**Jim Nutt**—Gloriously luminous portraits of women by the grand master of the freaky figuration associated with Chicago's Hairy Who group. In another life Nutt could have been a manuscript illuminator, but here he focusses his delicate brush and fine pen point on a particularly fanciful series of architectonic hairdos. These are not the tortured and tortuous women of the artist's past—temptresses who seemed to have lewd appendages in the oddest locations—but strong women who have obviously made it through some tough living. Through Oct. 17. (Kind, 136 Greene St.)

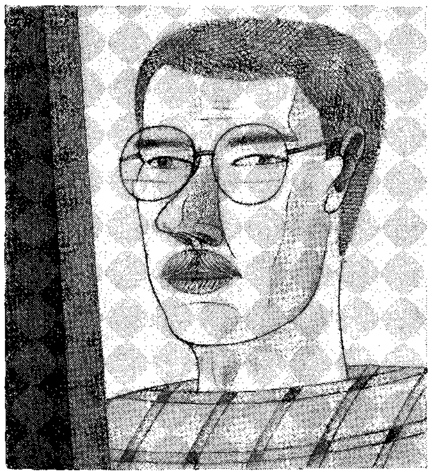
**The Peppers**—The paintings and objects of this Soviet conceptual-art duo focus on charts, peas, and potatoes, and exude a sense of absurdist resignation. The works are often very funny: two paintings, for example, overflow with mountains of peas—protruding from one is a woman's breast and from the other a satiric shrunken Hitler head. There is also a surrealistic primal quality to many of the objects, such as a mound of peas with a zippered metal lid. One room's walls are hung with painted diagrams of uterine secretions, while in the middle of the floor there are sheaves of wheat. A darkened room of potato paintings and another one filled with crudely charming paintings on handkerchiefs are entered through ceiling-to-floor curtains of rubber strips, as if you were a vehicle entering a car wash. Through Oct. 12. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St.)

**Sarah Seager**—The artist has taken essentially abstract and dull painted surfaces—large taffy-white canvases with occasional faint pools of yellowed enamel—and imposed on them a poetic, fantasy-filled mapping system whereby the slightly raised pools of paint become fictive land masses. Through Oct. 12. (Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St.)

**Jim Shaw**—A show of the artist's extensive collection of paintings bought in thrift stores—everything from portraits of clowns and pets to a depiction of a roll of bathroom tissue. Shaw doesn't attempt to encyclopedically document "amateur" painting—he has an overriding taste for the surreal. Although he doesn't seem to be suggesting that these works are on a par with those of "professionals," many of the paintings do passively indict the quality of much art deemed valuable. There are hours of pleasure here, and the artist's idiosyncratic taste might offer a few lessons to the collector who is interested only in the best by the greatest. Through Oct. 12. (Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St.)

**Alan Sonfist**—A while back Sonfist made "Time Landscape," a forest of actual pre-Colonial-type vegetation, at the corner of LaGuardia and Houston; it remains one of New York's most compelling public-art works. But his art of the past few years, as this exhibition of works in various mediums demonstrates, is disturbingly mute—it seems victimized by its own earnestness. Through Oct. 12. (LedisFlam, 584 Broadway.)

**Rémy Zaugg**—Late modernism, European style. This Swiss artist's brand of referential minimalism is handsome, intelligent, and somewhat melancholy. Each painting consists of dark-parchment-colored paint applied in varying degrees of thickness to a sheet of paper mounted on canvas. In most of the works, the paint partially or almost wholly obscures words painted on the sheets—either a text describing all the objects in a painting by Picasso that's based on a self-portrait by El Greco, or one analyzing the components of a painting by Cézanne. Through Oct. 9. (Brooke Alexander, 59 Wooster St. Open Wednesdays until 8.)



*Self-portrait by Jim Nutt*

**Short List**—**mary beyt**, Klagsbrun, 51 Greene St. (open Wednesdays until 8, through Oct. 5); **bernard chaet**, Pearl, 420 West Broadway (through Oct. 12); **nancy haynes**, Good, 532 Broadway (through Oct. 26); **brian kazlov**, O.K. Harris, 383 West Broadway (through Oct. 5); **harry kramer**, Cowles, 420 West Broadway (through Oct. 26); **jonathan lasker**, Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. (through Nov. 2); **arnold mesches**, Donahue, 560 Broadway (through Oct. 12); **juliao sarmento**, Louver, 130 Prince St. (through Oct. 12); **nancy shaver**, Marcus, 578 Broadway (through Oct. 12); **ursula von rydingsvärd**, Lorence-Monk, 578 Broadway (through Oct. 26).

### OTHER GALLERIES

**Short List**—**gretchen dow simpson**, Ryan, 452 Columbus Ave., at 81st St. (through Oct. 12); **robert smithson**, Schermerhorn Hall, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. (opens at 1 Wednesdays through Saturdays, through Oct. 26); **lawrence weiner** and **dan graham**, Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. (opens at noon Thursdays through Sundays, through Feb. 2).

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Virginia Zabriskie has performed another act of devotion in the form of an exhibition—"Paris in the Thirties: Surrealism and the Book." The show opened last spring at her gallery in Paris and will be at her gallery here (724 Fifth Avenue, at 57th Street) until October 26. Like many of her other exhibitions, this one is a celebration of personal visions, including collaborations, and it brings together a variety of mediums (drawings, collages, objects, prints, and photographs), as well as some wonderful examples of the show's reason for being—the books that occasioned much of the work that's on view. Because of their value, the books cannot be handled, and we found this prohibition frustrating—the peeks that one does get are so tantalizing—though understandable. Still, there's so much else to see that the installation remains a wonderful homage to the kind of vehicles books were to artists and poets of the thirties. The exhibition includes work by the well-known (Man Ray, Duchamp), as well as pieces by the now-forgotten (Claude Cahun). Of all the work on display, Hans Bellmer's quirky photographs of dolls (and his accompanying books on the same subject) because of their strangeness hooked us the most. These images are so strange that they're visually indigestible. But they take on added dimensions when considered with David Salle's photographs now showing nearby at the Robert Miller gallery. Between Bellmer and Salle there are enough constructions, reconstructions, and deconstructions of the female form to keep analysts attentive.

**Lee Friedlander**—Fifty nudes taken over the past twelve years. Through Oct. 8. (Museum of Modern Art.)

**David Graham / E. J. Bellocq** (1873-1949)—This show captures the "bigger the better" side of the American tradition. Graham's photographs of a restaurant shaped like a giant burger (sesame seeds and all), a house that looks like a shoe, and a roadside stand topped by a humongous doughnut are all uncondescending celebrations of American entrepreneurship. / Large-format portraits, taken around 1912, of New Orleans' Storyville prostitutes. *Both shows through Oct. 5. (Laurence* Miller, 138 Spring St.)

**Short List**—**dianne blell**, Castelli, 420 West Broadway (through Oct. 12); **robert capa**, International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. (open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; through Nov. 17); **henri cartier-bresson**, Danziger, 415 West Broadway (through Oct. 19); **lynn davis**, Hirschl & Adler Modern, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. (open Mondays, through Oct. 12); **patrick faigenb[illegible]m**, Gladstone, 99 Greene St. (through Oct. 12); **andreas gursky**, 303 Gallery, 89 Greene St. (through Oct. 12); **philippe halsman**, Staley-Wise, 555 Broadway (through Oct. 26); **andré kertész**, Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. and Houk Friedman, 1094 Madison Ave., at 82nd St. (both through Nov. 2); **david levinthal**, Borden, 560 Broadway (through Oct. 5); **mary ellen mark**, Castelli Graphics, 578 Broadway (through Oct. 19), and International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. (open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8, through Nov. 17); **david salle**, Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. (through Oct. 12); **joel sternfeld**, Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. (through Oct. 19); **lincoln tobier and ted byfield**, 10 on 8, Eighth Ave. at 53rd St. (through Oct. 12).

# MUSIC

ALONG with the tumultuous changes in the sort of new music that serious composers are writing has come a change in the atmosphere around it—the program notes, the reviews, the patronage, the grants, even the tenure decisions. Serialism and other procedures that tended toward knotty, dissonant results have been in decline, but the polemics that used to go with them have vanished almost entirely. Remember the arguments? The only logical path for music's future was the one of increasing harmonic complexity and loosening of tonal ties traced by Bach, Beethoven, Liszt, Wagner, Schoenberg. Only philistinism stood in the way of popularity for Boulez, Webern, Ligeti, Carter; if audiences were just *exposed* to these works often enough, they would learn to like them as they had those of other "difficult" composers from Beethoven to Stravinsky. Performers had a *duty* toward contemporary composers.

All of this has collapsed like a house of cards. Or not quite all; it is easy enough to see, for instance, that the people who guide the musical awards of the MacArthur Foundation remain fiercely devoted to the dissonant and the severe. But faculty appointments, residencies, prizes, and commissions by the dozens are going to neo-Romanticists and minimalists who wouldn't have been able to get into a graduate program fifteen years ago, and almost nobody believes anymore that (as Schoenberg once defensively said) if concertgoers were really musical they'd go away from "Pierrot Lunaire" whistling the tunes. What tunes? Sign of the times: for years, the electronic bells at Avery Fisher Hall that tell you to take your seat played serial tone rows. Now they play Mozart.

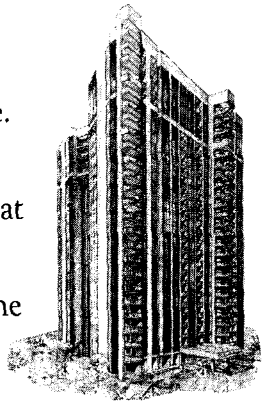
Knowing and loving certain masterpieces of the Second Viennese School and its offshoots, inclined by long practice to enjoy grappling aurally with a tough new score, but never having bought the idea that this was the only way to go or that it was a way large audiences were ever likely to go, we now look forward to having the work of the difficult modernists studied, played, heard, and cherished for what it is, without its getting caught up in unwinnable debates about what music ought to be. When we think about things that way, the Parnassus program of October 2 looks like a spring bouquet: Schoenberg's "Serenade" (with Nathaniel Watson as the baritone soloist); a reprise of Matthew Greenbaum's "Commedia," first performed by Parnassus four years ago; the American première of an unaccompanied flute piece by Elliott Carter, "Scrivo in Vento" (performed by Keith Underwood); and Kurtág (his "Canzone e Tarantella," premièred by Parnassus five years ago) and Martino rounding out the bill.

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Alice Tully Hall 875-5050; for Avery Fisher Hall 875-5030; for Carnegie Hall 247-7800; for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719; and for the 92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St., 415-5440.)

## OPERA

**METROPOLITAN OPERA**—**DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE,** with Dawn Upshaw, Ruth Welting, Jerry Hadley, Mikael Melbye, and Ara Berberian; conducted by James Levine. (Sept. 30 at 8.)... With Dawn Upshaw, Ruth Welting, Jerry Hadley, Mikael Melbye, and Jan-Hendrik Rootering; James Levine. (Oct. 4 at 8.)... **UN BALLO IN MASCHERA,** with Leona Mitchell, Sumi Jo, Stefania Toczyska, Peter Dvorsky, and Juan Pons; Thomas Fulton. (Oct. 1 at 8 and Oct. 5 at 1.)... With Leona Mitchell, Sumi Jo, Stefania Toczyska, Peter Dvorsky, and Giorgio Lormi; Thomas Fulton. (Oct. 9 at 8.)... **IDOMENEO,** with Cheryl Studer, Hei-Kyung Hong, Anne Sofie von Otter, and Anthony Rolfe Johnson; James Levine. (Oct. 2, Oct. 5, and Oct. 8, all at 8.)... **DON GIOVANNI,** with Carolyn James, Judith Forst, Ruth Ann Swenson, Stanford Olsen, Ferruccio Furlanetto, and Timothy Noble; James Levine. (Oct. 3 and Oct. 7 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House.)

**NEW YORK CITY OPERA**—**LES PÊCHEURS DE PERLES,** with Gail Dobish, John Fowler, Patryk Wroblewski, and Matthew Lau; conducted by Mark Gibson. (Oct. 1 at 8 and Oct. 6 at 2.)... **DIE TOTE STADT,** Erich Wolfgang Korngold's evocative tale of obsessive love and death, more suggestive of Freud's turn-of-the-century Vienna than of the postwar world that greeted its première, in 1920. With Stephanie Sundine, Robynne Redmon, John Absalom, and Richard Byrne; George Manahan. (Oct. 2 and Oct. 5 at 8.)... **MADAME BUTTERFLY,** with Eva Zseller, Susanne Marsee, Rick Moon, and William Stone; Chris Nance. (Oct. 4 at 8.)... **THE MOST HAPPY FELLA,** with Michele McBride, Joanna Glushak, Susanne Marsee, John Fiorito, John Leslie Wolfe, Brian Quinn, and Arthur Rubin; Chris Nance. (Oct. 5 at



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2.). . . **DIE SOLDATEN,** the much anticipated New York stage première of Bernd Alois Zimmermann's complex, eclectic opera (first presented in 1965), based on a play by the eighteenth-century dramatist Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz. The unusually large cast includes Lisa Saffer, Claudia Cummings, Cynthia Rose, Joyce Castle, Thomas Young, Eugene Perry, Jan Opalach, and Michael Rees Davis; Christopher Keene. (Oct. 8 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

**AMATO OPERA COMPANY**—Presenting "Le Nozze di Figaro." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Oct. 4-5 at 7:30.)

**"THE SHIP OF FOOLS"**—In this staged presentation, members of the Mannes Camerata enact tales from the "Heptameron" of Marguérite de Navarre, enlivened with sixteenth-century music and dances by Josquin Desprez, Janequin, Arcadelt, and others. Paul C. Echols conducts. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. Oct. 5-6 and Oct. 9, all at 8. Through Oct. 12. For information about tickets, call 496-8524.)

**WORKS BY ROBERT ASHLEY**—At Merkin Concert Hall. Concert presentations of two works that the composer calls "TV Operas." Oct. 7-8 at 8: "Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)," featuring soprano Jacqueline Humbert. . . . ¶ Oct. 9 at 8: "eL/Aficionado," featuring baritone Thomas Buckner.

**LEE HOIBY OPERAS**—See under "Bon Appétit!" in Theatre listings.

## ORCHESTRAS

**NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC**—At Avery Fisher Hall. Oct. 1 at 7:30: Kurt Masur conducts Bach's Cantata No. 202 (the wedding cantata "Weichet nur, betrübte Schatten," with soprano Edith Wiens), and Grieg's incidental music to "Peer Gynt" (featuring the New York Choral Artists). Bellina Logan and Len Cariou will read portions of Ibsen's text in the Grieg. . . . ¶ Oct. 3-5 at 8, and Oct. 8 at 7:30: Yuri Temirkanov conducts Prokofiev's "Lieutenant Kije Suite," Rimsky-Korsakov's "Scheherazade," and Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto (with soloist Elizo Virzaladze).

**JUNGE DEUTSCHE PHILHARMONIE**—Michael Gielen conducts the Frankfurt-based youth orchestra in the "Symphony in One Movement" by Bernd Alois Zimmermann, Schubert's Ninth Symphony, and Brahms' Double Concerto, with violinist Christian Tetzlaff and cellist Yo-Yo Ma. (Carnegie Hall. Sept. 30 at 8.)

**PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA**—Riccardo Muti directs two works of mournful mien: Petrassi's "Coro di Morti" and Mozart's Requiem; with soprano Arleen Auger, mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer, tenor Jozef Kundlak, bass Simon Estes, and the Westminster Symphonic Choir. (Carnegie Hall. Oct. 1 at 8.)

**JUILLIARD ORCHESTRA**—James DePreist, conductor of the Oregon Symphony, leads Mahler's Ninth Symphony and Mozart's Piano Concerto in E-Flat, K. 482 (with Elena Abend). (Avery Fisher Hall. Oct. 2 at 8.)

**NEW YORK POPS**—Skitch Henderson conducts selections by Dvořák, Debussy, Burt Bacharach, and Vincent Youmans. Walt Levinsky and the Great American Swing Band join them to resuscitate sounds of the Big Band Era. (Carnegie Hall. Oct. 4 at 8.)

**NEW YORK CHAMBER SYMPHONY**—Gerard Schwarz conducts Schubert's Fifth Symphony, Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 5 (featuring Yefim Bronfman), and Paul Creston's 1965 "Choreografic Suite" (with John van Buskirk negotiating the prominent orchestral piano part). Creston, one of numerous mid-century American symphonists recently championed by Mr. Schwarz on recordings, started life in 1906 as Giuseppe Guttoveggio, son of a Sicilian immigrant to New York. When he was twenty he began a career (under his acquired name) as an organist, first for silent movies, then (when the advent of "talkies" rendered his position obsolete) at St. Malachy's Church, where he reigned in the loft for more than three decades. Completely self-taught in composition, he cultivated a distinctive (and highly appealing) style based on perpetual rhythmic shifts, sometimes reminiscent of jazz, but typically with a richly orchestrated harmonic overlay. At his death in 1985, Creston left behind a consistently ingenious body of work (including much appreciated additions to the repertoires of such generally overlooked instruments as saxophone, trombone, and accordion) and—ironically, given his autodidacticism—a pair of important treatises on notation and rhythm. For those who were wondering, the suite's title reflects the composer's interest in orthographic—or orthografic—reform. (92nd Street Y. Oct. 5 at 8 and Oct. 6 at 3.)

**AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA**—An eightieth-birthday tribute to the Armenian-American composer Alan Hovhannes, conducted by Karel Husa. The program comprises four orchestral pieces by the exceedingly prolific composer—including his best-known symphony (his second, titled "Mysterious Mountain") and his most recent one (his sixty-fifth, Op. 428)—sung and spoken tributes, and comments from Mr. Hovhannes. (Carnegie Hall. Oct. 6 at 2.)

**ORPHEUS**—The conductorless chamber orchestra collaborates with Murray Perahia in three Mozart piano concertos: the F-Major (K. 413, the composer's polite self-introduction to the Viennese public), the bold and spacious C-Major (K. 503), and the aristocratic, unhurried E-Flat-Major (K. 482). (Carnegie Hall. Oct. 7 at 8.)

## RECITALS

**DAVID MURRAY**—The double-bass player, assisted by pianist Mary Ann Brown, performs original compositions and arrangements, including music by Bach and Bottesini. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. Oct. 1 at 6. Admission by contribution.)

**ALAN AND ALVIN CHOW**—The pianists (who are brothers) perform solo and duo works. (Steinway Hall, 109 W. 57th St. Oct. 1 at 7. No tickets necessary.)

**MENAHEM PRESSLER**—The pianist (a founding member of the Beaux Arts Trio, and an acknowledged exponent of elegance in pianism) performs in three concerts exploring different aspects of Mozart. Oct. 1 at 8: Chamber music for two, three, four, and five players, with members of the New York Chamber Soloists. . . . ¶ Oct. 3 at 8: Solo works, including three sonatas, a rondo, and a fantasy. . . . ¶ Oct. 6 at 3: Two concertos (in B-Flat Major, K. 450, and in G-Major, K. 453) and the Quintet in E-Flat, with members of the New York Chamber Soloists. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. )

**JEFFREY SIEGEL**—The pianist opens his season of "Keyboard Conversations" with a lecture-recital on Brahms' late keyboard works. (92nd Street Y. Oct. 2 at 8.)

**PARNASSUS**—Anthony Korf conducts the modern-music ensemble in music by Schoenberg, Elliott Carter, Donald Martino, György Kurtág, and Matthew Greenbaum. (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. Oct. 2 at 8. For information about tickets, call 864-4197.)

**PARTITA CHAMBER ENSEMBLE**—Performing chamber music by Ives, Brahms (his Horn Trio, Op. 40), and Hindemith (his rarely performed Quartet for Violin, Cello, Clarinet, and Piano). (Marymount Manhattan Theatre, 221 E. 71st St. Oct. 2 at 8. For information about tickets, call 666-0165.)

**BARGEMUSIC**—Violinist Ik-Hwan Bae, cellist Kaeko Mukoyama, and pianist Joseph Villa perform chamber music by Beethoven, Brahms, and Shostakovich. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Oct. 3 at 7:30 and Oct. 6 at 4.)

**MARGARET LENG TAN AND GORDON MONAHAN**—Ms. Tan performs new piano compositions by Ge Gan-ru, Toshi Ichiyanagi, and Somei Satoh; and Mr. Monahan interprets his own "This Piano Thing," for prepared piano. Presented by Composers' Forum. (Merkin Concert Hall. Oct. 3 at 8.)

**MOZARTEAN PLAYERS**—Violinist Stanley Ritchie, cellist Myron Lutzke, and fortepianist Steven Lubin offer a trio of trios written in Vienna between 1787 and 1797: Mozart's Trio in B-Flat, K.502; Haydn's Trio in C, Hob. XV/27; and Beethoven's Trio in E-Flat, Op. 1, no. 1. Mr. Lubin also performs Mozart's haunting Adagio in B Minor, K. 540. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. Oct. 4 at 8.)

**ANONYMOUS 4**—The four-woman vocal ensemble presents its reconstruction of a thirteenth-century "Ladymass" (a Mass to the Virgin routinely offered in medieval England), in which Sarum chants alternate with polyphonic motets and Middle English devotional poetry. (St. Michael's Church, Amsterdam Ave. at 99th St. Oct. 4 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

**CHRISTINA KISS**—The pianist plunges into the second season of her traversal of the complete piano works of Liszt by performing (among other pieces) Liszt's arrangement of Beethoven's First Symphony and the U.S. première of a "Grande Fantasie di Bravura." The "Fantasie," which was published only last year (by scholars in Budapest), is a substantial work, nearly fifteen minutes long, based on the Paganini caprice known as "La Campanella," but completely unrelated to Liszt's other, well-known elaboration of the same theme. (Weill Recital Hall. Oct. 5 at 2.)

*Anthony Rolfe Johnson in "Idomeneo," at the Met*

**NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC ENSEMBLES**—Members of the orchestra present chamber music by Telemann, Mozart, Brahms, and Bartók. (Merkin Concert Hall. Oct. 6 at 3.)

**SERGEI LEIFERKUS**—In his New York début recital, the Russian baritone sings, among other works, Glinka's "Farewell to St. Petersburg" and Mussorgsky's "Songs and Dances of Death." Semyon Skigin accompanies. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. Oct. 6 at 5. For information about tickets, call 288-0700.)

**ANGELA CHENG**—The pianist, who earlier this year was awarded top honors at the Palm Beach Invitational International Piano Competition, performs sonatas by Beethoven, Berg, and Schumann, as well as works by Debussy, Rachmaninoff (his "Corelli Variations"), and Schnittke (the New York première of his 1965 "Variation and Fugue"). (Alice Tully Hall. Oct. 6 at 8.)

**LUCIA POPP**—The soprano is assisted by pianist Armen Guzelimian in songs by Dvořák, Mahler, Wolf, and Strauss. (Alice Tully Hall. Oct. 8 at 8.)

**CHAMBER MUSIC AT THE Y**—Violinist Jaime Laredo and cellist Sharon Robinson perform the "Handel/Halvorson Passacaglia"; Ani and Ida Kavafian offer a Mozart duo for violin and viola; the Tokyo String Quartet plays Bartók's Fourth Quartet; and all parties join in for Mendelssohn's ebullient Octet. (92nd Street Y. Oct. 8-9 at 8.)

**HOPKINSON SMITH**—In the first concert of a series that will serve as an aural adjunct to the Metropolitan Museum's exhibit of Spanish guitars, Mr. Smith performs works by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Iberian composers, some on the vihuela and some on the Renaissance guitar. (Uris Auditorium, Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 81st St. Oct. 9 at 7. For information about tickets, call 570-3919.)

**ITZHAK PERLMAN AND DANIEL BARENBOIM**—The violinist and the pianist perform four duo-sonatas by Mozart. (Avery Fisher Hall. Oct. 9 at 8.)

**THOMAS YEHUDA TIRINO**—Pianist, performing works by Schubert (the "Wanderer Fantasy"), Janáček (the Sonata "October 1, 1905"), Liszt, and Granados, as well as the première of David Diamond's "Meditation on Kol Nidre." (Alice Tully Hall. Oct. 9 at 8.)

## JAZZ/POP/ROCK
### PERSONAL APPEARANCES

**Luther Vandross**—Ten years into his solo career as the consummate R. & B. performer and quiet-storm crooner, this rotund singer has been broadcasting in interviews his wounded sense of incomplete and limited success. Even without a No. 1 hit, Vandross's record sales place him among the very few male performers at the pinnacle of popularity, yet the smoothness and quirklessness of the producer-designed, post-classical-soul style that makes him so popular also prevents him from getting over into the elusive ranks of—for want of a better term—superstardom. (The lack of an ineffable quality of abrasive strangeness has not held back female peers like Mariah Carey and Whitney Houston.) The middle of the road may be too smooth for the singer himself, but it will probably satisfy the consoling fans who crowd this arena. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Oct. 2-3 and Oct 5-6 at 8.)

**Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers**—The V s are long gone, but Tom Petty continues to celebrate a victory of sorts—he's a great, workmanlike musician who rises above the lonely highways and fickle women in his life. His latest album, "Into the Great Wide Open," sticks close to its predecessor, the radiant "Full Moon Fever," but his recent partnership with Jeff Lynne is beginning to wear thin. On record, the music they forge together, a sweetly tuned, intimate sound that's wry yet overly familiar in a Traveling Wilburys sort of way, lacks verve. The real magic happens onstage, where Petty's band, the Heartbreakers, and especially the guitarist Mike Campbell, punch up the songs into a rowdy, swinging rock-and-roll affair. Anthems away. (Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 794-9300. Oct. 8 at 8. . . . ¶ Meadowlands Arena. 1-201 935-3900. Oct. 9 at 7:30.)

**Crowded House**—With Richard Thompson. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Oct. 2 at 8.)

**Hoodoo Gurus**—Academy Theatre, 234 W. 43rd St. 307-7171. Oct. 3 at 9.

**Santana**—Paramount, Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Oct. 4 at 8.

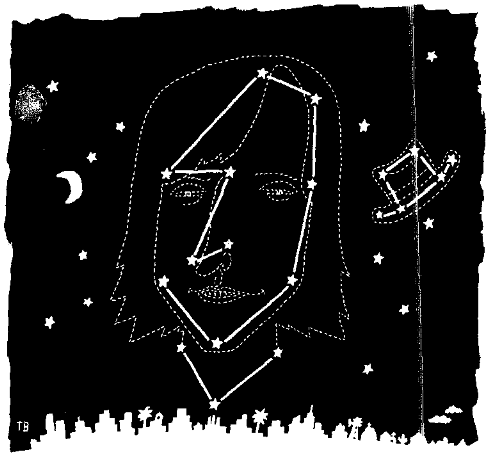
**Music of South India**—A. Kanyakumari, V. Raja Rao, and V. Nagarajan. (Washington Square Church, 135 W. 4th St. Oct. 4 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

**Richie Vitale Quintet**—With Barry Harris. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Oct. 4 at 8.)

**Mongo Santamaria**—Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Oct. 4 at 8.

**Inkhay**—Music and dance of the Andes. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Oct. 5 at 8.)

**Benefit Concerts**—Bruce Cockburn, Indigo Girls, Jackson Browne, and the American Indian Dance Theatre. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Oct. 7 at 7:30.). . . ¶ Cinuçen Tanrikorur and Simon Shaheen. (Washington Square Church, 135 W. 4th St. Oct. 5 at 8. For information about tickets, call 545-7536.). . . ¶ A tribute to Lorenz Hart, with Sylvia Syms, Daugherty & Field, Ann Hampton Callaway, Jason Graae, Julie Wilson, and others. (Promenade Theatre, Broadway at 76th St. Oct. 7 at 8. For information about tickets, call 741-2247.)



*Tom Petty*

## SPORTS

### HOME TEAMS

**Mets**—Away for the rest of the regular season.

**Yankees**—Vs. the Baltimore Orioles, Oct. 1-3 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Clevland Indians, Oct. 4 at 7;30 and Oct. 5-6 at 1:30.

**Giants**—Vs. the Phoenix Cardinals, Oct. 6 at 4.

**Rangers**—Vs. the Boston Bruins, Oct. 7. . . . ¶ Vs. the Islanders, Oct. 9. (Game time, 7:30.)

**Devils**—Vs. the Quebec Nordiques, Oct. 8 at 7:35.

(The Yankees play at Yankee Stadium, 293-6000. The Giants play at Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands; for tickets, call 1-201 935-8222. The Rangers play at Madison Square Garden, 465-6000; the Islanders at the Nassau Coliseum, 1-516 794-9300; and the Devils at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)

### RACING

**Horses**—At Belmont: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 1. The Jockey Club Gold Cup is on Oct. 5; the Beldame and the Turf Classic are on Oct. 6. Through Oct. 21. . . . At the Meadowlands: Tuesdays through Saturdays at 7:30. . . . **trotting** at Yonkers Raceway: Mondays through Saturdays at 8, Tuesdays at 1, and Sundays at 6.

## ABOVE AND BEYOND

**Tiny**—From Oct. 3 to Oct. 6, the people at the New York Botanical Garden are putting on their annual display of bonsai. More than forty of the little plants will be auctioned off on Oct. 6, starting at 4. For more information, call 220-8777.

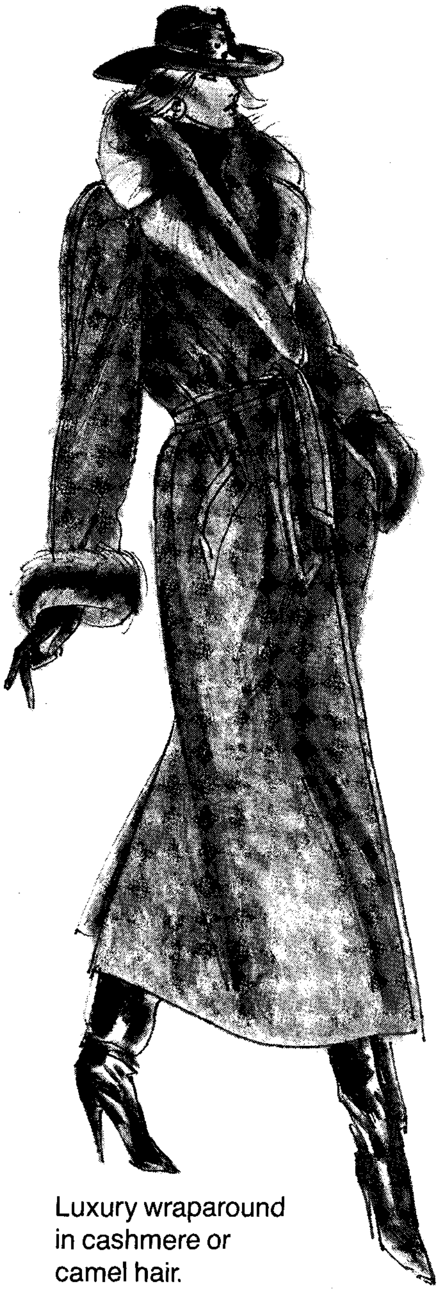
**Blessed Creatures**—The Feast of St. Francis is Oct. 6, and, on that day, at 11 A.M., New Yorkers can take their pets up to the Cathedral of St. John the Divine (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St.), show them off, and have them blessed at the same time. Hundreds of house pets, as well as a llama, an elephant, a python, a pot full of algae, and herds of excited children, will occupy the aisles in the giant cathedral. The celebration is free, but reservations are recommended. Call 316-7563.

**Churches**—A walking tour, on Oct. 6 at 12:45, sponsored by the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, of holy spots downtown (Church of St. Luke In-the-Fields, Grace Church, Our Lady of Pompei, Judson Memorial, and First Presbyterian, among others). For reservations, call 924-3895.

**Lectures**—Oct. 3 at 5:30: Helgi Tomasson, of the San Francisco Ballet, talks about his career. (City Center, fourth-floor studio, 130 W. 56th St. 581-7907.). . . ¶ Oct. 8 at 6: The photographer Loren McIntyre talks about his work. (New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 390-0571.)

**Readings**—Sept. 30 at 6: James Merrill, Eamon Grennan, Jorie Graham, Katha Pollitt, Amy Clampitt, and Philip Levine read from their own poetry. Alice Quinn introduces. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. For information about tickets, call 741-5689.). . . ¶ Oct. 2 at 8: Kenneth Koch and Ron Padgett read from their own poetry. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.). . . ¶ Oct. 4 at 8: E. L. Doctorow, Roy Blount, Jr., Galway Kinnell, Walter Dean Myers, and Ntozake Shange read from their own prose. (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. For information about tickets, call 875-4124.). . . ¶ Oct. 6 at 3: Elaine Terranova, Patricia Eakins, and Thomas Lux read from their own poetry. (Civic Center Synagogue, 49 White St., between Church St. and Broadway. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ Oct. 7 at 8: Alice Walker reads from her own prose. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440.). . .¶ Oct. 8 at 12:30: Richard Goodman reads from his own prose. (Brentano's, Fifth Ave. at 48th St. No tickets necessary.). . .¶ Oct. 8 at 7: Linda Gregg and Philip Levine read from their own poetry. (French Institute–Alliance Française, 22 E. 60th St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.)

**memorandum**—The Brooklyn Botanic Garden will hold its fall plant sale on Oct. 5, from 10 to 5, and Oct. 6, from 11 to 3. For information, call 1-718 622-4433.



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FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 22.

### EAST SIDE

**Angelika Film Center,** 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: “Slacker” (†).
Theatre 2: “Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll” (†).
Theatre 3: Through Oct. 3: “La Femme Nikita” (†). From Oct. 4: “The Rapture” (directed by Michael Tolkin), with Mimi Rogers.
Theatre 4: The 23rd International Tournée of Animation.
Theatre 5: “Thousand Pieces of Gold” (Nancy Kelly).
Theatre 6: “Trust” (†).

**Public Theatre,** 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Sept. 30: Theatre closed.
Oct. 1-3: “My Name Is Julia Ross” (1945, Joseph H. Lewis), with Nina Foch, Dame May Whitty, and George Macready; and “The Big Combo” (1955, Joseph H. Lewis), with Cornel Wilde, Jean Wallace, Richard Conte, Lee Van Cleef, and Brian Donlevy.
Oct. 4-5: “Eyes Without a Face” (†); “Un Chien Andalou” (1928, Luis Buñuel), a short silent film, with Pierre Batcheff, Salvador Dalí, and Buñuel himself; and “Death in the Garden” (1956, Buñuel; in French), with Simone Signoret and Georges Marchal.
Oct. 6: “Route One” (1989, Robert Kramer).
Oct. 7: Theatre closed.
Oct. 8: “La Chienne” (1931, Jean Renoir; in French), with Michel Simon; and “Pattes Blanches” (1949, Jean Grémillon; in French).
Oct. 9: “Going Places” (†); and “Buffet Froid” (1980, Bertrand Blier; in French), with Gérard Depardieu, Jean Carmet, Bernard Blier, and Geneviève Page.

**Movieland 8th Street Triplex,** 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: “Barton Fink” (†).
Theatre 2: “The Fisher King” (Terry Gilliam), with Robin Williams and Jeff Bridges.
Theatre 3: Through Oct. 3: “Barton Fink” (†). From Oct. 4: “Ricochet” (Russell Mulcahy), with Denzel Washington and John Lithgow.

**Loews Village Theatre VII,** 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)
Theatre 1: “The Indian Runner” (Sean Penn), with David Morse.
Theatre 2: “Dead Again” (†).
Theatre 3: Through Oct. 3: “Dogfight” (Nancy Savoca), with River Phoenix and Lili Taylor. From Oct. 4: “Whore” (Ken Russell), with Theresa Russell.
Theatre 4: “Liebestraum” (Mike Figgis), with Kevin Anderson, Pamela Gidley, Bill Pullman, and Kim Novak.
Theatre 5: Through Oct. 3: “Livin' Large!” (Michael Schultz), with Terrence (T. C.) Carson. From Oct. 4: “Stepping Out” (Lewis Gilbert), with Liza Minnelli.
Theatre 6: “Rambling Rose” (Martha Coolidge), with Laura Dern, Diane Ladd, Lukas Hass, and Robert Duvall.
Theatre 7: “Dead Again” (†).

**Cinema Village 12th Street,** 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)
“Eating” (Henry Jaglom).

**Village East Cinemas,** 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)
Theatre 1: “The Miracle” (†).
Theatre 2: “The Doctor” (†).
Theatre 3: “Boyz N the Hood” (†).
Theatre 4: “Naked Tango” (Leonard Schrader).
Theatre 5: Through Oct. 3: “Undertow” (Thomas Mazziotti), with Peter Dobson. From Oct. 4: “Twenty-One” (Don Boyd).
Theatre 6: “Deceived” (Damian Harris), with Goldie Hawn and John Heard.
Theatre 7: Through Oct. 3: “Pastime” (Robin B. Armstrong), with William Russ and Glenn Plummer. From Oct. 4: “Paradise” (Mary Agnes Donoghue), with Melanie Griffith, Don Johnson, Elijah Wood.

**Cinema Village 3rd Avenue,** between 12th and 13th. (505-7320)
“Festival of Animation 1991,” short films.

*Laura Dern in “Rambling Rose”*

**Loews 19th Street East 6,** B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: Through Oct. 8: “McBain” (James Glickenhaus), with Christopher Walken and Maria Conchita Alonso. From Oct. 9: “Little Man Tate” (Jodie Foster), with Foster, Dianne Wiest, Harry Connick, Jr., and Adam Hann-Byrd.
Theatre 2: Through Oct. 3: “Late for Dinner” (W. D. Richter), with Brian Wimmer and Peter Berg. From Oct. 4: “Ricochet” (Russell Mulcahy), with Denzel Washington and John Lithgow.
Theatre 3: “Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves” (Kevin Reynolds), with Kevin Costner.
Theatre 4: “Terminator 2: Judgment Day” (†).
Theatre 5: “The Fisher King” (Terry Gilliam), with Robin Williams and Jeff Bridges.
Theatre 6: Through Oct. 3: “Necessary Roughness” (Stan Dragoti), with Scott Bakula, Robert Loggia, Harley Jane Kozak, Sinbad, and Hector Elizondo. From Oct. 4: “Suburban Commando” (Burt Kennedy), with Hulk Hogan, Christopher Lloyd, and Shelley Duvall.

**Gramercy,** Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
“The Doctor” (†).

**Bay Cinema,** 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
“Late for Dinner” (W. D. Richter), with Brian Wimmer and Peter Berg.

**Murray Hill Cinemas,** 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: “Boyz N the Hood” (†).
Theatre 2: “Thelma & Louise” (†).
Theatre 3: “Deceived” (Damian Harris), with Goldie Hawn and John Heard.
Theatre 4: Through Oct. 3: “Livin' Large!” (Michael Schultz), with Terrence (T. C.) Carson. From Oct. 4: “Paradise” (Mary Agnes Donoghue), with Melanie Griffith, Don Johnson, and Elijah Wood.

**Loews 34th Street Showplace,** 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: “Necessary Roughness” (Stan Dragoti), with Scott Bakula.
Theatre 2: “Dead Again” (†).
Theatre 3: Through Oct. 3: “Showdown in Little Tokyo” (Mark L. Lester), with Dolph Lundgren and Brandon Lee. From Oct. 4: “Ricochet” (Russell Mulcahy), with Denzel Washington and John Lithgow.

**34th St. East,** 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
Through Oct. 3: “Defenseless” (†).
From Oct. 4: “The Super” (Rod Daniel), with Joe Pesci, Vincent Gardenia, Madolyn Smith Osborne, and Rubén Blades.

**Eastside Cinema,** 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
Through Oct. 3: “McBain” (James Glickenhaus), with Christopher Walken and Maria Conchita Alonso.
From Oct. 4: “Paris Is Burning” (†).

**Sutton 1 and 2,** 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: Through Oct. 3: “Doc Hollywood” (Michael Caton-Jones), with Michael J. Fox. From Oct. 4: “Twenty-One” (Don Boyd), with Patsy Kensit.
Theatre 2: “The Doctor” (†).

**Gotham Cinema,** 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
“Hot Shots!” (†).

**Plaza,** 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
“My Own Private Idaho” (†).

**Manhattan Twin,** 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: Through Oct. 3: “Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare” (Rachel Talalay). From Oct. 4: “The Super” (Rod Daniel), with Joe Pesci, Vincent Gardenia, Madolyn Smith Osborne, and Rubén Blades.
Theatre 2: Through Oct. 3: “Livin' Large!” (Michael Schultz), with Terrence (T. C.) Carson. From Oct. 4: “Shout” (Jeffrey Hornaday), with James Walters, Heather Graham, Richard Jordan, Linda Fiorentino, and John Travolta.

**59th Street East Cinema,** 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
“Necessary Roughness” (Stan Dragoti), with Scott Bakula.

**Baronet and Coronet,** 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: “Rambling Rose” (Martha Coolidge), with Laura Dern, Diane Ladd, Lukas Hass, and Robert Duvall.
Theatre 2: “Barton Fink” (†).

**Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue,** 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: “Deceived” (Damian Harris), with Goldie Hawn and John Heard.
Theatre 2: “Paradise” (Mary Agnes Donoghue), with Melanie Griffith, Don Johnson, and Elijah Wood.
Theatre 3: “Naked Tango” (Leonard Schrader).

**Gemini 1 and 2,** 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: “The Fisher King” (Terry Gilliam), with Robin Williams and Jeff Bridges.
Theatre 2: Through Oct. 3: “Terminator 2: Judgment Day” (†) From Oct. 4: “Ricochet” (Russell Mulcahy), with Denzel Washington and John Lithgow..

**Beekman,** 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
Through Oct. 3: “The Commitments” (†).
From Oct. 4: “Whore” (Ken Russell), with Theresa Russell.

**Loews New York Twin,** 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: “Dead Again” (†).
Theatre 2: Through Oct. 8: “Late for Dinner” (W. D. Richter), with Brian Wimmer and Peter Berg. From Oct. 9: “Little Man Tate” (Jodie Foster), with Foster, Dianne Wiest, Harry Connick, Jr., and Adam Hann-Byrd.

**68th St. Playhouse,** 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
“The Story of Boys and Girls” (Pupi Avati, in Italian).

**Loews Tower East,** 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
Through Oct. 3: “The Pope Must Die” (Peter Richardson), with Robbie Coltrane.
From Oct. 4: “Stepping Out” (Lewis Gilbert), with Liza Minnelli.

**U. A. East,** 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
“Necessary Roughness” (Stan Dragoti), with Scott Bakula.

**Park & 86th Street Cinemas,** 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: “Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare” (Rachel Talalay).
Theatre 2: Through Oct. 3: “Livin' Large!” (Michael Schultz), with Terrence (T. C.) Carson. From Oct. 4: “The Super” (Rod Daniel), with Joe Pesci, Vincent Gardenia, Madolyn Smith Osborne, and Rubén Blades.

**86th Street East Twin,** 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: “Dead Again” (†).
Theatre 2: “Deceived” (Damian Harris), with Goldie Hawn and John Heard.

### WEST SIDE

**Film Forum,** 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: Through Oct. 1: “Black Lizard” (1968, directed by Kinji Fukasaku; in Japanese). From Oct. 2: “Takeover: Heroes of the New American Depression” (Peter Kinoy and Pamela Yates) and “To the Moon, Alice” (1989, Jessie Nelson).
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: Through Oct. 1: “Paris Is Burning” (†). From Oct. 2: “Black Lizard.”

**Waverly 1 and 2,** 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: Through Oct. 3: “Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare” (Rachel Talalay). From Oct. 4: “The Super” (Rod Daniel),

with Joe Pesci, Vincent Gardenia, Madolyn Smith Osborne, and Rubén Blades.

Theatre 2: "My Own Private Idaho" (†).

**8th St. Playhouse,** 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)
"Thelma & Louise" (†).

**Art Greenwich Twin,** Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)

Theatre 1: "Late for Dinner" (W. D. Richter), with Brian Wimmer and Peter Berg.

Theatre 2: "Necessary Roughness" (Stan Dragoti), with Scott Bakula.

**Quad Cinema,** 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)

Theatre 1: "Truly, Madly, Deeply" (Anthony Minghella), with Juliet Stevenson, Alan Rickman, Bill Paterson, and Michael Maloney.

Theatre 2: "My Mother's Castle" (Yves Robert, in French), with Julien Ciamaca.

Theatre 3: "My Father's Glory" (Yves Robert, in French), with Julien Ciamaca.

Theatre 4: Through Oct. 1: "Defenseless" (†). From Oct. 2: "Paris Is Burning" (†).

**Chelsea Cinemas,** 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)

Theatre 1: "Dead Again" (†).

Theatre 2: "Rambling Rose" (Martha Coolidge), with Laura Dern, Diane Ladd, Lukas Hass, and Robert Duvall.

Theatre 3: "The Commitments" (†).

Theatre 4: Through Oct. 3: "Rambling Rose." From Oct. 4: "Whore" (Ken Russell), with Theresa Russell.

Theatre 5: Through Oct. 3: "Dogfight" (Nancy Savoca), with River Phoenix and Lili Taylor. From Oct. 4: "Shout" (Jeffrey Hornaday), with James Walters, Heather Graham, Richard Jordan, Linda Fiorentino, and John Travolta.

Theatre 6: "The Commitments" (†).

Theatre 7: Through Oct. 3: "Deceived" (Damian Harris), with Goldie Hawn and John Heard. From Oct. 4: "Paradise" (Mary Agnes Donoghue), with Melanie Griffith, Don Johnson, and Elijah Wood.

Theatre 8: "Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare" (Rachel Talalay).

Theatre 9: Through Oct. 3: "Livin' Large!" (Michael Schultz), with Terrence (T. C.) Carson. From Oct. 4: "The Super" (Rod Daniel), with Joe Pesci, Vincent Gardenia, Madolyn Smith Osborne, and Rubén Blades.

**23rd St. West Triplex,** 333 W. 23rd. (989-0050)

Theatre 1: Through Oct. 3: "Undertow" (Thomas Mazziotti), with Peter Dobson. From Oct. 4: "Twenty-One" (Don Boyd), with Patsy Kensit.

Theatre 2: "Boyz N the Hood" (†).

Theatre 3: "Defenseless" (†).

**Guild,** 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)

Through Oct. 3: "101 Dalmatians" (1961), a full-length Walt Disney cartoon.

From Oct. 4: "Paradise" (Mary Agnes Donoghue), with Melanie Griffith, Don Johnson, and Elijah Wood.

**Worldwide Cinemas,** 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)

Theatre 1: "An Angel at My Table" (†).

Theatre 2: "Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll" (†)

Theatre 3: "City Slickers" (Ron Underwood), with Billy Crystal, Daniel Stern, and Bruno Kirby.

Theatre 4: "Regarding Henry" (†).

Theatre 5: Through Oct. 3: "Double Impact" (Sheldon Lettich), with Jean-Claude Van Damme. From Oct. 4: "Whore" (Ken Russell), with Theresa Russell.

Theatre 6: "Doc Hollywood" (Michael Caton-Jones), with Michael J. Fox.

**Ziegfeld,** 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"The Commitments" (†).

**Loews Festival,** 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
"The Indian Runner" (Sean Penn), with David Morse.

**57th St. Playhouse,** 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe" (†).

**Carnegie Hall Cinemas,** 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)

Theatre 1: "Barton Fink" (†).

Theatre 2: Through Oct. 3: "Barton Fink" (†). From Oct. 4: "The Rapture" (Michael Tolkin), with Mimi Rogers.

**Loews Fine Arts,** 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)

Through Oct. 3: "Dogfight" (Nancy Savoca), with River Phoenix and Lili Taylor.

From Oct. 4: "The Man in the Moon" (Robert Mulligan), with Sam Waterston, Tess Harper, and Gail Strickland.

**Cinema 3,** 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"Defenseless" (†).

**Loews Paramount,** B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"The Doctor" (†).

**62nd & Broadway,** 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"The Commitments" (†).

**Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3,** B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)

Theatre 1: "Uranus" (Claude Berri, in French), with Jean-Pierre Marielle, Philippe Noiret, Michel Blanc, Gérard Desarthe, Gérard Depardieu, and Daniel Prevost.

Theatre 2: "Europa Europa" (†).

Theatre 3: Through Oct. 3: "Paris Is Burning" (†). From Oct. 4: "La Belle Noiseuse" (Jacques Rivette, in French), with Michel Piccoli, Emmanuelle Béart, and Jane Birkin.

**Regency,** B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"Rambling Rose" (Martha Coolidge), with Laura Dern, Diane Ladd, Lukas Hass, and Robert Duvall.

**Loews 84th Street Sixplex,** B'way at 84th. (877-3600)

Theatre 1: Through Oct. 3: "Late for Dinner" (W. D. Richter), with Brian Wimmer and Peter Berg. From Oct. 4: "Ricochet" (Russell Mulcahy), with Denzel Washington and John Lithgow.

Theatre 2: "The Fisher King" (Terry Gilliam), with Robin Williams and Jeff Bridges.

Theatre 3: Through Oct. 3: "Necessary Roughness" (Stan Dragoti), with Scott Bakula,. From Oct. 4: "Paradise" (Mary Agnes Donoghue), with Melanie Griffith, Don Johnson, and Elijah Wood.

Theatre 4: "Dead Again" (†).

Theatre 5: "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (†).

Theatre 6: Through Oct. 8: "Showdown in Little Tokyo" (Mark L. Lester), with Dolph Lundgren and Brandon Lee. From Oct. 9: "Little Man Tate" (Jodie Foster), with Foster, Dianne Wiest, Harry Connick, Jr., and Adam Hann-Byrd.

**Metro Cinema 1 and 2,** B'way at 99th. (222-1200)

Theatre 1: Through Oct. 3: "Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare" (Rachel Talalay). From Oct. 4: "Shout" (Jeffrey Hornaday), with James Walters, Heather Graham, Richard Jordan, Linda Fiorentino, and John Travolta.

Theatre 2: Through Oct. 3: "Deceived" (Damian Harris), with Goldie Hawn and John Heard. From Oct. 4: "Whore" (Ken Russell), with Theresa Russell.

**Olympia I and II,** B'way at 107th. (865-8128)

Theatre 1: "Livin' Large!" (Michael Schultz), with Terrence (T. C.) Carson.

Theatre 2: Through Oct. 3: "City Slickers" (Ron Underwood), with Billy Crystal, Daniel Stern, and Bruno Kirby. From Oct. 4: "The Super" (Rod Daniel), with Joe Pesci, Vincent Gardenia, Madolyn Smith Osborne, and Rubén Blades.

## TIMES SQUARE AREA

**Criterion Center,** B'way at 44th. (354-0900)

Theatre 1: "The Fisher King" (directed by Terry Gilliam), with Robin Williams and Jeff Bridges.

Theatre 2: "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (†).

Theatre 3: "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves" (Kevin Reynolds), with Kevin Costner.

Theatre 4: Through Oct. 3: "McBain" (James Glickenhaus), with Christopher Walken and Maria Conchita Alonso. From Oct. 4: "Ricochet" (Russell Mulcahy), with Denzel Washington and John Lithgow.

Theatre 5: Through Oct. 3: "Hot Shots!" (†). From Oct. 4: "The Super" (Rod Daniel), with Joe Pesci, Vincent Gardenia, Madolyn Smith Osborne, and Rubén Blades.

Theatre 6: Through Oct. 3: "Boyz N the Hood" (†). From Oct. 4: "Suburban Commando" (Burt Kennedy), with Hulk Hogan, Christopher Lloyd, and Shelley Duvall.

**Embassy 1,** B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
"Deceived" (Damian Harris), with Goldie Hawn and John Heard.

**Embassy 2, 3, and 4,** 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)

Theatre 1: "Late for Dinner" (W. D. Richter), with Brian Wimmer and Peter Berg.

Theatre 2: "Dead Again" (†).

Theatre 3: "True Identity" (Charles Lane), with Lenny Henry, Frank Langella, and Lane.

**Loews Astor Plaza,** 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"Necessary Roughness" (Stan Dragoti), with Scott Bakula.

**National Twin,** B'way at 44th. (869-0950)

Theatre 1: "Livin' Large!" (Michael Schultz), with Terrence (T. C.) Carson.

Theatre 2: "Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare" (Rachel Talalay).

**West Side Cinema 1 and 2,** 7th Ave. at 48th. (398-1720)

Theatre 1: "Showdown in Little Tokyo"

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## MOVIE HOUSES—Cont'd

(Mark L. Lester), with Dolph Lundgren and Brandon Lee.
Theatre 2: "Showdown in Little Tokyo."

## REVIVAL HOUSES

**Film Forum 2,** 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Sept. 30: "A Chinese Ghost Story II" (1990, directed by Ching Siu-Tung).
Oct. 1-2: "The Killer" (1989, John Woo).
Oct. 3: "The Young Master" (1980, Jackie Chan), with Chan.
Oct. 4-5: "Bullet in the Head" (1990, John Woo).
Oct. 6-7: "Gunman" (1988, Kirk Wong).
Oct. 8-9: "Swordsman" (1990, King Hu and Tsui Hark).

**Theatre 80 St. Marks,** 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Sept. 30: "Kamikaze '89" (1982, Wolf Gremm; in German), with Rainer Werner Fassbinder; and "Nosferatu, the Vampyre" (1979, Werner Herzog; in German), with Klaus Kinski, Isabelle Adjani, and Bruno Ganz.
Oct. 1: "Midnight" (1939, Mitchell Leisen), with Claudette Colbert and Don Ameche; and "Three-Cornered Moon" (1933, Elliott Nugent), with Claudette Colbert, Richard Arlen, and Mary Boland.
Oct. 2: "Mr. Arkadin" (1955, Orson Welles), with Welles, Michael Redgrave, Patricia Medina, and Akim Tamiroff; and "The Stranger" (1946, Orson Welles), with Welles, Edward G. Robinson, and Loretta Young.
Oct. 3: "China Seas" (1935, Tay Garnett), with Jean Harlow, Clark Gable, Rosalind Russell, Wallace Beery, and Lewis Stone; and "Riffraff" (†).
Oct. 4-5: "Breakfast at Tiffany's" (1961, Blake Edwards), with Audrey Hepburn, George Peppard, Patricia Neal, Buddy Ebsen, Martin Balsam, and Mickey Rooney; and "Roman Holiday" (1953, William Wyler), with Audrey Hepburn, Gregory Peck, and Eddie Albert.
Oct. 6: "Golden Earrings" (1947, Mitchell Leisen), with Marlene Dietrich and Ray Milland; and "Morocco" (1930, Josef von Sternberg), with Dietrich, Gary Cooper, and Adolphe Menjou.
Oct. 7: "La Grande Illusion" (1937, Jean Renoir; in French), with Erich von Stroheim, Jean Gabin, Pierre Fresnay, and Marcel Dalio; and "La Bête Humaine" (1938, Jean Renoir; in French), with Jean Gabin, Simone Simon, Carette, Fernand Ledoux, Blanchette Brunoy, and Renoir himself.
Oct. 8: "Chinatown" (†); and "Marlowe" (†).
Oct. 9: "North by Northwest" (1959, Alfred Hitchcock), with Cary Grant, Eva Marie Saint, James Mason, Jessie Royce Landis, Leo G. Carroll, and Martin Landau; and "I Confess" (1953, Hitchcock), with Montgomery Clift, Anne Baxter, Karl Malden, and Brian Aherne.

## FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

**Museum of Modern Art,** Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—Oct. 3 at 2:30: "Anatomy of a Murder" (1959, directed by Otto Preminger), with James Stewart, Lee Remick, Ben Gazzara, Arthur O'Connell, and George C. Scott. . . . ¶ Oct. 3 at 3 and 6: "Before Him All Rome Trembled" (1946, Carmine Gallone; in Italian), with Anna Magnani. . . . ¶ Oct. 3 at 6: "Dr. No" (1963, Terence Young), with Sean Connery, Ursula Andress, and Joseph Wiseman. . . . ¶ Oct. 4 at 2:30 and Oct. 6 at 5: "Gli Uomini . . . Che Mascalzoni" (1932, Mario Camerini; in Italian), with Vittorio De Sica. . . . ¶ Oct. 4 at 3: "The Youth of Maxim" (1935, Grigori Kozintzev and Leonid Trauberg; in Russian), with Boris Chirkov. . . . ¶ Oct. 4 at 6 and Oct. 6 at 2: "The Gold of Naples" (1957, De Sica; in Italian), with Sophia Loren, De Sica, Silvana Magnano, and Totò. . . . ¶ Oct. 4 at 6 and Oct. 5 at 2:30: "Bona" (1980, Lino Brocka; in Tagalog), with Nora Aunor. . . . ¶ Oct. 5 at 2 and Oct. 7 at 6: "Due Cuori Felini" (1932, Baldassare Negroni; in Italian), with De Sica. . . . ¶ Oct. 5 at 5 and Oct. 8 at 2:30: "Doctor Beware" (1941, De Sica; in Italian), with De Sica, Adriana Benetti, and Anna Magnani. . . . ¶ Oct. 5 at 5: "Isn't Life Wonderful" (1924, D. W. Griffith; silent), with Carol Dempster, Neil Hamilton, and Lupino Lane. . . . ¶ Oct. 6 at 2:30: "The Woman on the Beach" (1947, Jean Renoir), with Joan Bennett, Robert Ryan, and Charles Bickford. . . . ¶ Oct. 6 at 5: "Hud" (1963, Martin Ritt), with Paul Newman, Patricia Neal, and Melvyn Douglas. . . . ¶ Oct. 7 at 2:30: "Tempo Massimo" (1934, Mario Mattoli; in Italian), with De Sica, Milly, and Magnani. . . . ¶ Oct. 8 at 3 and 6: "Betrayal" (1939, Fedor Ozep; in French), with Annie Vernay. . . . ¶ Oct. 8 at 6: "Un Garibaldino al Convento" (1942, De Sica; in Italian).

**New York Film Festival**—The final programs in a series of international films—**alice tully hall:** Sept. 30 at 6:15: "Life on a String" (Chen Kaige, China/Great Britain/Germany). . . . ¶ Sept. 30 at 9:15 and Oct. 1 at 6:15: "The Rapture" (Michael Tolkin, United States). . . . ¶ Oct. 1 at 9:15: "Flaming Creatures" (Jack Smith, United States), "The Making of 'Monsters' " (John Greyson, Canada), and "Opening the 19th Century: 1896" (Ken Jacobs, United States). . . . ¶ Oct. 2 at 6 and Oct. 3 at 8:45: "La Belle Noiseuse" (Jacques Rivette, Switzerland/France). . . . ¶ Oct. 2 at 11:15: "Beauty and the Beast" (Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, United States), an animated film. . . . ¶ Oct. 3 at 6:15: "Intimate Stranger" (Alan Berliner, United States) and "The Body Beautiful" (Ngozi Onwurah, Great Britain). . . . ¶ Oct. 4 at 6:15 and Oct. 5 at 9: "Zombie and the Ghost Train" (Mika Kaurismaki, Finland). . . . ¶ Oct. 4 at 9:15 and Oct. 5 at 12:30: "Night on Earth" (Jim Jarmusch, United States). . . . ¶ Oct. 5 at 3:30: "Earth Entranced" (1967, Glauber Rocha; Brazil). . . . ¶ Oct. 5 at 6:15: "Pictures from a Revolution" (Susan Meiselas, Richard P. Rogers, and Alfred Guzzetti; United States). . . . ¶ Oct. 5 at midnight: "Delicatessen" (Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro, France). . . . **avery fisher hall:** Oct. 6 at 8:30: "Homicide" (David Mamet, United States) (For tickets, call 875-5050.)

**Anthology Film Archives,** 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Oct. 2 at 8: A program of short films by Ron Rice, Hans Richter, and Paul Sharits. . . . ¶ Oct. 2 at 9:30: "Francesco, Giullare di Dio" (1949, Roberto Rossellini; in Italian, with no English subtitles). . . . ¶ Oct. 3 at 7 and 9:30, Oct. 4 at 8 and 10, Oct. 5 at 4, 8, and 10, and Oct. 6 at 6 and 8: A program of films by HHK Schoenherr. . . . ¶ Oct. 5 at 7: "White Heat" (1949, Raoul Walsh), with James Cagney, Virginia Mayo, Edmond O'Brien, and Margaret Wycherly. . . . ¶ Oct. 5 at 9: "The Lusty Men" (1952, Nicholas Ray), with Susan Hayward, Robert Mitchum, Arthur Kennedy, and Arthur Hunnicutt. . . . ¶ Oct. 6 at 2: 'Pressure Point" (1962, Hubert Cornfield), with Sidney Poitier and Bobby Darin. The film will be followed with a talk by Lisa Kennedy. . . . ¶ Oct. 6 at 7: "Alexander Nevsky" (1938, Sergei Eisenstein; in Russian), with Nikolai Cherkassov. . . . ¶ Oct. 6 at 9: "The Dybbuk" (†). . . . ¶ Oct. 9 at 7, 8:30, and 10: "The Heck with Hollywood!" (1991, Doug Block). . . . ¶ Oct. 9 at 7: "Les Enfants Terribles" ("The Strange Ones"; 1949, Jean-Pierre Melville; in French), with Nicole Stéphane, Edouard Dermithe, Renée Cosima, and Jacques Bernard. . . . ¶ Oct. 9 at 9: "M" (1931, Fritz Lang; in German), with Peter Lorre.

**Asia Society,** Park Ave. at 70th St. (517-2742)—A program of films from Korea. Oct. 4 at 7: "Come, Come, Come Upward!" (1989, Im Kwon-taek). . . . ¶ Oct. 5 at 2: "The General's Son" (1990, Im Kwon-taek). . . . ¶ Oct. 5 at 5: "My Love, My Bride" (1990, Lee Myung-se). . . . ¶ Oct. 6 at 2: "School Record Isn't Proportional to Happiness" (1991, Kang Woo-suk). . . . ¶ Oct. 6 at 5: "The Dream" (1990, Bae Chang-ho).

**Japan Society,** 333 E. 47th St. (752-3015)—Oct. 4 at 6:30 and Oct. 5 at 1: "Takeshi" (1990, Masahiro Shinoda; in Japanese), with Tetsuya Fujita.

# IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

**An Angel at My Table**—Based on the autobiography of the New Zealand novelist and poet Janet Frame. The film covers the first forty years or so of the writer's life—she was born in 1924—and takes close to three hours to tell the story. When it's all over, you feel that you know far too little about Janet Frame and far too much about the film's director, Jane Campion. The movie (which was made as a three-part miniseries for *Australian television) is a succession of odd,* mannered tableaux, more or less in the style of Campion's 1990 art-house hit, "Sweetie." The compositions emphasize the peculiarities of Janet's appearance, especially in her childhood and awkward adolescence: she has a stiff, frizzy mop of bright-orange hair, and her teeth are badly decayed. The Janet Frame we see in this film doesn't seem to have an inner life, and without that she has no life at all. Even the most dramatic events in her life are treated so flatly and elliptically that we're unable to respond; time after time, we find that we can't orient ourselves in crucial scenes, because the director hasn't bothered to establish the characters or the setting. Writers' lives are weird enough without being subjected to this sort of willful disruption of their emotional continuity. Campion's perverse exercise in biographical filmmaking deserves a new title: "My Incomprehensible Career." Janet is played by three actresses: as a child, by Alexia Keogh; as a young teenager, by Karen Fergusson; and, as an adult, by Kerry Fox. Screenplay by Laura Jones.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/3/91.) (Worldwide Cinemas.)

**Barton Fink**—The Coen brothers' macabre comedy about a blocked writer in 1941 Hollywood is densely packed with allusions, clever dialogue, ingenious visual jokes, startling plot twists, and imaginative atmospheric effects, yet it feels thin. It's an empty tour de force, and what's dismaying about the picture is that the filmmakers (Joel Coen directed, Ethan Coen produced, and they wrote the script together) seem inordinately pleased with its hermetic meaninglessness. Fink (John Turturro), the protagonist, is a left-wing New York playwright—obviously based on Clifford Odets—who signs a contract to write screenplays in Hollywood. His first assignment is a wrestling picture for Wallace Beery. He can't get started on it: he sits in his seedy, depressing hotel room, stares at the typewriter, and feels defeated. The Coens treat this emblematic figure of thirties culture with merciless contempt. They quickly expose him as a phony, a buffoon, and a talentless hack, and then spend the rest of the movie punishing him. The picture is designed to visit ever more grotesque indignities on a character who's pitiful from the outset; there's not much fun in that. And there's no fun at all in Turturro's hyperactive performance: the way he plays this leftist intellectual, the movie might as well have been called "The Nutty Pinko." The Coens' interests are purely academic, and their prankish formalism becomes very irritating in the course of the picture. Also with John Goodman, Michael Lerner, John Mahoney, Judy Davis, and Tony Shalhoub. The movie won awards for best picture, best director, and best actor (Turturro) at the 1991 Cannes Film Festival.—T.R. (9/9/91) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Coronet, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

**Boyz N the Hood**—The writer and director, John Singleton, is a twenty-three-year-old graduate of the U.S.C. film school. This movie, his first, is a classically constructed—and *therefore rather predictable—coming-of-age* drama about young black men growing up on the mean streets of south-central Los Angeles. The picture conveys a vivid sense of the dangers, both physical and emotional, of day-to-day existence in this ravaged urban environment. It's a war zone, and its inhabitants—the people on the front lines—mostly don't have the luxury of planning long-range survival strategies: they're too busy reacting to the immediate, unremitting daily threats. Singleton's evocation of real people's struggles to find some measure of peace and sanity in these grim urban circumstances is heartfelt and often moving, and the movie provides a welcome corrective to the dehu-

*Based on S. Anski's play about a vow between friends that results in the demonic transformation of their children, the 1937 Polish film "The Dybbuk" (playing October 6 at Anthology Film Archives) is poignant and sometimes mesmerizing even when it's stilted and laborious. It tries your patience but it also rewards you with a mystical fervor and a layered emotionality that are rare in movies of any era. Seeing it in a beautifully restored print is like entering worlds within worlds. Anski (the pseudonym for Schloyme Zanvl Rappaport) wrote the play after a folklore-gathering mission in the Ukraine. The Polish-Jewish filmmakers who adapted Anski's work—Michal Waszynski, the director, and Alter Kacyzne and Andrzej Marek, the screenwriters—share the same sense of mission. Waszynski pulls off one daring expressionist episode: a bride's prenuptial dance with Death. His best move, however, is simply to open up the play—not just to fill a movie's larger capacity for atmosphere but also (one presumes) as an act of cultural and religious preservation.*

*At the beginning, two fathers-to-be pledge that if their wives give birth to a daughter and a son, these children will be wed. The action centers on what happens when the son tries to prevent the marriage of the daughter to another man. To quote from Joseph C. Landis's translation of the play, the son summons Satan "with that great doubly spoken name that fuses in its flames the highest peaks with the deepest valleys." Struck dead, he becomes one of the dybbuks—"wandering souls that find no rest. These enter the living body of another and thereby attain purity." In that form, he invades the body of his beloved. Anski's play pits irrational forces against the reasoned justice of a rabbinical court. The entire film is a haunted artifact, wrested from the rubble of an annihilated civilization.*

manizing sensationalism of the local-news version of inner-city life. But the young filmmaker's professionalism and precocious self-assurance sometimes work against his best instincts. Singleton's plot is disappointingly conventional; it obeys screenwriting-class rules. The experience he's dealing with here deserves more than the tidy dramatic structure that he has imposed on it. We get glimpses of what the movie might have been in the complex, magnetic performance of Ice Cube, a rap star (formerly of N.W.A.), who plays a neighborhood gangster type named Doughboy. Also with Cuba Gooding, Jr., Larry Fishburne, Nia Long, Tyra Ferrell, and Angela Bassett.—T.R. (Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and 23rd St. West Triplex. . . . ¶ Criterion Center; through Oct. 3.)

**Chinatown** (1974)—Set in the thirties, this nostalgic thriller, in the style of Hammett and Chandler, draws on the history of Los Angeles, specifically the water-rights and real-estate swindles. You can feel the conflict between the temperaments of the scriptwriter, Robert Towne, and the director, Roman Polanski. In Towne's conception, the audience discovers the depth of the corruption along with the romantic-damn-fool detective

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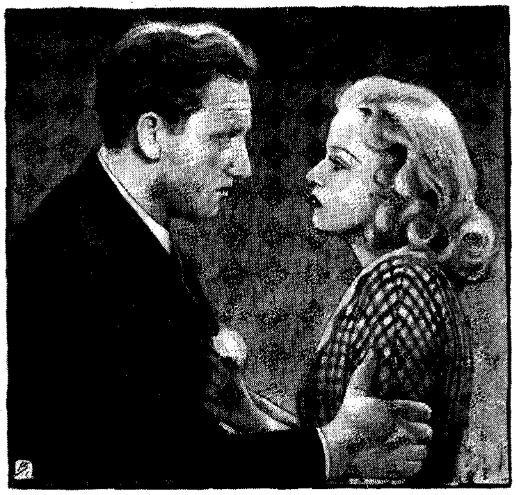
J. J. Gittes (Jack Nicholson). Polanski, whose movies don't leave you anything to hang on to, turns the material into an extension of his world view: he makes the L.A. atmosphere gothic and creepy from the word go. The film holds you, in a suffocating way. Polanski never lets the story tell itself. It's all overdeliberate, mauve, nightmarish; everyone is yellow-lacquered, and evil runs rampant. You don't care who is hurt, since everything is blighted. And yet the nastiness has a look, and a fascination. There's a celebrated background story to the film. The script had originally ended after Gittes realizes what horrors the woman he loved, the twitchy liar Evelyn Mulwray (Faye Dunaway), had been through. And then she kills her incestuous, baronial father (John Huston) in order to save her daughter from him, and Gittes helps the young girl to get to Mexico. But Polanski, an absurdist, seals the picture with his gargoyle grin. He ends it with the death of Evelyn Mulwray and the triumph of the Huston character, who had raped the land, raped his daughter, and would now proceed to corrupt the daughter's daughter. Polanski's temperament dominates (and he seems indifferent to some of the plot points). Yet Towne's temperament comes through, too, especially in Nicholson's Jake Gittes, the vulgarian hero who gives the picture much of its comedy: Gittes gets to tell wittily inane, backslapping jokes, and to show the romanticism inside his street shrewdness. With Polanski as the vicious "midget" hood who takes his knife and slits open Gittes' nose, Burt Young as the man looking at pictures of his faithless wife, John Hillerman, Perry Lopez, Joe Mantell, and Diane Ladd. Cinematography by John A. Alonzo; production design by Richard Sylbert; editing by Sam O'Steen; music by Jerry Goldsmith. (A sequel, "The Two Jakes," was released in 1990.)—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Oct. 8.)

**The Commitments**—Alan Parker's film is a loose, friendly musical comedy about the brief career of an Irish soul band. The Commitments are the brainchild of an energetic young music enthusiast named Jimmy Rabbitte (Robert Arkins), who lives in a poor Dublin neighborhood. He puts together a ten-piece group that learns, eventually, to play precise and spirited versions of soul classics in the Memphis style. The music of the Commitments isn't original, but that doesn't prevent it from being enormously *entertaining*: the band's hard-won proficiency charms us. Parker concentrates on the day-to-day details of rehearsals and performances; he seems to revel in the complexity of the group's musical, emotional, and sexual interactions, and he does full comic justice to the petty irritations of life in a band. What holds the Commitments together is a combination of Jimmy's ingenuity, their common pleasure in making music, and the daily challenge of responding to their fellow band members' provocations with quick, profane humor. The kids' verbal sparring is another kind of music—maybe the true sound of Dublin soul. Until the last half hour, when the direction gets a little pushy, the picture has an offhand, unassuming grace. Most of the Commitments are played by young Dublin musicians who answered a casting-call advertisement. They're a vivacious and spontaneous crew: Andrew Strong, Angeline Ball, Maria Doyle, Glen Hansard, Kenneth McCluskey, Félim Gormley, Dave Finnegan, Dick Massey, and Michael Aherne. The only professional actors among them are Bronagh Gallagher and Johnny Murphy (as the group's guru, a fiftyish trumpet player known as Joey the Lips). Colm Meaney does a very funny turn as Jimmy's Elvis-worshipping dad. The screenplay is by Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais, and Roddy Doyle, from Doyle's novel. The songs are great—chosen, with unusual intelligence, from the repertoires of Otis Redding, Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, and other soul giants.—T.R. (8/26/91) (Chelsea Cinemas, Ziegfeld, and 62nd & Broadway. . . . ¶ Beekman; through Oct. 3.)



*Spencer Tracy and Jean Harlow in "Riffraff"*

**Dead Again**—This murder mystery, directed by Kenneth Branagh from a wildly complicated screenplay by Scott Frank, wears its inanity on its sleeve. It shuttles breezily between the present day, in which an L.A. detective named Mike Church (Branagh) is trying to discover the identity of an attractive amnesiac (Emma Thompson), and the late forties, in which a European composer and conductor (also Branagh) may or may not have murdered his pianist wife (also Thompson). These stories are, of course, connected: the amnesiac might even be a reincarnation of the conductor's wife, stabbed to death with a pair of scissors forty years earlier. Branagh makes no attempt to disguise the script's preposterousness. He revels in it, both as actor and as director. The mood of the picture is both frivolous and spooky, and the suspense often seems a function of sheer giddiness: as the movie dances, with drunken insouciance, toward the simultaneous climaxes of its two stories, the tension we feel is partly fear that Branagh won't be able to maintain his precarious balance. Finally, the picture does come crashing down. When it's time to wrap up the mystery, the movie leaves too many of the plot's enigmas unresolved, and Branagh's insouciance loses its charm. Throughout, he has toyed affectionately with mystery-fiction conventions and old-movie style, and his dash and flair have carried us along. But the botched conclusion casts a bit of a pall over the reckless fun that the movie has given us. In the end, Branagh's approach to the genre seems negligent, insultingly cavalier. Also with Derek Jacobi, Andy Garcia, Hanna Schygulla, and (in a hilarious cameo) Robin Williams.—T.R. (9/9/91) (Loews Village Theatre VII, Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews New York Twin, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy.)

**Defenseless**—The tail doesn't wag the dog, it merely swats some of the fleas that infest this mongrel thriller. Barbara Hershey is the thousandth smart female lawyer since "Jagged Edge" to fall for a shady client, in this case J. T. Walsh: he turns out to be married to Hershey's college roommate (played by Mary Beth Hurt). Sam Shepard is the male lead—the cop who investigates Walsh's murder. The movie starts out flip, squeezing laughs from the sleaziness of the porno world and the ostentation of L.A.'s nouveau riche; then it becomes hypocritically "moral." James Hicks' script (from a story by Hicks and Jeff Burkhart) brings up legal issues it never rules on. Audiences are likely to raise more objections than the lawyers do. Hershey skillfully skirts breakdown, Hurt is weirdly funny and dissociated, and Shepard milks his taciturnity for humor as well as tension. There's even a slick final twist. But these virtues don't compensate for a narrative that recklessly cuts suspects and victims in and out of the story line. It's the suspense-film equivalent of a gerrymander. Martin Campell directed.—M.S. (23rd St. West Triplex, and Cinema 3. . . . ¶ Quad Cinema; through Oct. 1. . . . ¶ 34th St. East; through Oct. 3.)

**The Doctor**—Although it's sure to hook some viewers who want to see the medical establishment get knocked, this is no exposé—it's yet another story of identity crisis in the professional class, a fraternal, if not identical, twin of "Regarding Henry." William Hurt plays the surgical golden boy who develops a case of galloping humanity after he's diagnosed with throat cancer; Christine Lahti and Charlie Korsmo play his neglected wife and son; Elizabeth Perkins is the life-force who inspires him (she's suffering from a Grade IV brain tumor); and, in matched parts, Mandy Patinkin is a callous Jewish doctor (Hurt's longtime partner) and Adam Arkin is a saintly Jewish doctor (who shows Hurt correct values). The director, Randa Haines, titillates the audience with a barrage of doctors' jokes and then tries to prove that the cynical professionalism of hospital staffs is no laughing matter. In effect, the movie goes from comic shtick to problem-drama shtick, and fuses them. Hurt's performance is the type usually described as "accomplished," but what exactly does it accomplish? It's a careful embodiment of a clammed-up individual; not a hint of zest or dirt or soulfulness seeps out. The script, credited to Robert Caswell, is loosely based on "A Taste of My Own Medicine," by Ed Rosenbaum, M.D.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas, Gramercy, Sutton, and Loews Paramount.)

**Europa Europa**—This superb film by the Polish director Agnieszka Holland is based on the memoirs of Salomon Perel, a German Jew who spent much of the Second World War passing for Aryan in an élite Hitler Youth academy. The movie dramatizes this almost inconceivable survival story with a surprisingly light touch. It bounds from one jaw-dropping episode to the next with the speed and the unnerving neutrality of a picaresque adventure, and never pauses to judge its ambiguous hero; it's content to let the ironies of his situation collect around him like reflections in dressing-room mirrors. His family's flight from the Nazis begins in 1938, on the eve of his bar mitzvah. Solly (played by a remarkable young actor, Marco Hofschneider) lands first in Lodz, Poland, and then in the Soviet Union, where he becomes a star pupil in a Communist school. After the Wehrmacht invades Russia and takes him prisoner, he reincarnates himself as an orphaned "pure" German, an Aryan child wandering in the barbaric eastern wilderness. By the time he is initiated into the Hitler Youth, he has already run through several identities, and has proved himself capable of playing his roles with conviction and enthusiasm. We remain, however, constantly aware (as he is) of what his Nazi disguise conceals—his circumcised penis, the irreversible and unambiguous sign of his identity as a Jew. Holland uses this physical evidence of Solly's Jewishness as the fulcrum of the movie's delicately balanced narrative and moral tensions. Also with Julie Delpy, Andre Wilms, Halina Labonarska, and Rene Hofschneider. The real Salomon Perel appears, as himself, in the movie's final scene. In German and Russian.—T.R. (7/1/91) (Lincoln Plaza.)

**Eyes Without a Face** (1959)—This famous film by Georges Franju opened in this country on double bills in a dubbed version called "The Horror Chamber of Dr. Faustus," but it's perhaps the most austerely elegant horror film ever made. Franju called it "a poetic fantasy," and it's a symbolist attack on the ethics of scientists. Though in its way it's as simpleminded as the usual romantic young poet's denunciations of war or commerce, it has a vague, floating, lyric sense of dread which goes beyond the simpler effects of horror movies that don't make intellectual claims. Franju's approach is almost as [illegible]ified and as mystic as Bresson's. The story is about a surgeon (Pierre Brasseur) who, in systematic experiments, removes the faces of beautiful young kidnapped women and tries to graft them onto the ruined head of his daughter (Edith Scob). He keeps failing, the girls are destroyed, yet he persists, in a terrible parody of the scientific method. In the end, the daughter—still only eyes without a face—liberates the baying hounds on which he has also been experimenting, and they tear off *his* head. The film is both bizarrely sophisticated (with Alida Valli as the mad surgeon's mistress, doing the kidnapping in a black leather coat) and ridiculously naïve (in its plot elements). With Juliette Mayniel as Edna, François Guérin as Jacques, and Claude Brasseur. The cinematography is by the great Eugen Schüfftan;

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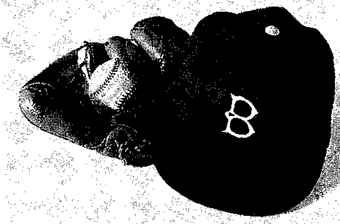

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the music is by Maurice Jarre; the superb gowns are by Givenchy. From Jean Redon's novel; Claude Sautet was one of Franju's troupe of co-writers. In French.—P.K. (Public Theatre; Oct. 4-5.)

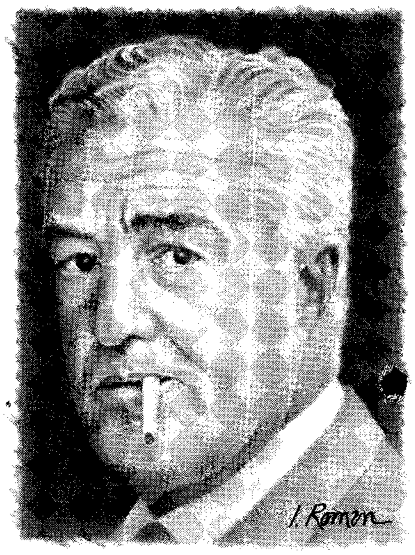
**LA FEMME NIKITA**—The end of French cinema as we know it. Written and directed by Luc Besson. With Anne Parillaud, Jean-Hugues Anglade, Tcheky Karyo, and (in a cameo) Jeanne Moreau. In French.—T.R. (Angelika Film Center; through Oct. 3.)

**GOING PLACES** (1974)—Bertrand Blier's explosively funny erotic farce is both a celebration and a satire of men's daydreams. It makes you laugh at things that shock you, and some people find its gusto revolting in much the same way that the bursting comic force of the sexual hyperbole of Henry Miller's book "Tropic of Cancer" was thought revolting. The crude energy of the two young roughneck protagonists (Gérard Depardieu and Patrick Dewaere) is overwhelming, grungy, joyous. They're outsiders without jobs or money who want to satisfy their appetites. So they snatch purses, steal cars, swipe things from shops, and make passes at almost every woman they get near. It takes a half hour or so before a viewer grasps that the two pals are guileless raw innocents and that almost everything they do backfires on them. They're cavemen who give women what in their exuberant male fantasies women want. Brutal, lyrical slapstick connections get made in this movie. With Brigitte Fossey as the nursing mother on the train, Miou-Miou as the scraggly-blond waif, Jeanne Moreau as the middle-aged woman who emerges sex-starved from ten years in prison, and Isabelle Huppert as the teen-ager. The screenplay, by Blier and Philippe Dumarcay, is based on Blier's novel. The cinematography is by Bruno Nuytten; the jazz violin score is by Stephane Grappelli. In French.—P.K. (Public Theatre; Oct. 9.)

**HOT SHOTS!**—"Good for a few laughs" may be the motto for the "Airplane!" college of filmmaking, but it applies literally to this sputtering spoof of military movies and commercials. The lampoons go all over the globe, in more ways than one. The director, Jim Abrahams, and his co-writer, Pat Proft (who also co-wrote "The Naked Gun 2½," with David Zucker), stab away at the myth of American and Hollywood know-how without proving their own competence at creating momentum or a solid comic personality. The maverick pilot played by Charlie Sheen isn't a magnetic parody figure. He simply stands in for an entire generation of male action stars who are also just stand-ins. And Abrahams' funny treatment of Second World War clichés doesn't mesh with his gloss on the MTV flyboy epic "Top Gun." His movie becomes part of the same junk-food chain as that glorified video game: the ad might as well read, "You've seen the original, you've bought the soundtrack, you've rented the cassette, now see the takeoff!" Co-starring Valeria Golino, Cary Elwes, Jon Cryer, the underused Bill Irwin and Lloyd Bridges, and the Chihuahuas Jake and Elwood.—M.S. (Gotham Cinema. . . . ¶ Criterion Center; through Oct. 3.)

**MARLOWE** (1969)—As Raymond Chandler's detective, in this adaptation of "The Little Sister," James Garner doesn't disgrace himself, but the film, directed by Paul Bogart, doesn't stay with you in the way that most of the Philip Marlowe pictures do. It just doesn't have much personality. The script by Stirling Silliphant is no help. With Gayle Hunnicutt, Carroll O'Connor, Rita Moreno, Bruce Lee, Sharon Farrell, William Daniels, and Jackie Coogan.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Oct. 8.)

**THE MIRACLE**—A beautiful new film by the Irish writer and director Neil Jordan ("Mona Lisa," "The Company of Wolves"). The setting is the coastal town of Bray, which is a short train ride from Dublin. Two teen-agers, Jimmy (Niall Byrne) and Rose (Lorraine Pilkington), spend most of their days wandering along the seaside promenade and making up stories about the people they run into: taking off from the human material that presents itself to them, the kids trade verbal riffs with the gleeful competitiveness of jamming musicians. One day, they spot a mysterious-looking blond woman (Beverly D'Angelo), and Jimmy becomes obsessed with her. He pursues her, in Bray and in Dublin, with an ardor that's partly sexual and partly something else—a feeling so muddled and inchoate that he can't put a name to it. Jordan turns this simple story into a clear, complete vision of experience: everything we see (and hear) flows into everything else, with an unpredictable rightness. The imagery draws on some pretty outré sources, and the climax—the miracle of the title—is a daring, flamboyant gesture. But Jordan manages to unite everything—the florid imagery, the dark emotional undertones, the flaky comedy, the astonishing physical beauty of the Irish seacoast—into a single, unbroken mood, a smooth arc connecting the past and the present, the familiar and the unforeseen. Also with Donal McCann. The cinematography, by Philippe Rousselot, is extraordinary.—T.R. (7/15/91) (Village East Cinemas.)



*At MOMA, a Vittorio De Sica retrospective*

**MY OWN PRIVATE IDAHO**—With River Phoenix, Keanu Reeves, James Russo, and William Richert; directed by Gus Van Sant. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Plaza, and Waverly.)

**PARIS IS BURNING**—Jennie Livingston's documentary about gay black and Latino men who compete in drag balls is a beautiful piece of work—lively, intelligent, exploratory. The drag queens we see here seem to be holding up a mirror to the world of the empowered as they see it in movies, TV shows, and magazines. In the ballroom, some present themselves as elegant, glamorous women in designer outfits, and walk with the hip-swinging slouch of runway models, while others adopt more mundane personas: college students (of both sexes); military men; Wall Street businessmen; aristocrats at play, dressed for yachting or riding to hounds. The criteria by which all these turns are judged is verisimilitude—"realness." The material is almost too rich, too suggestive. Everything about the ball culture signifies so blatantly and so promiscuously that the movie induces a kind of semiotic daze. Livingston is smart enough not to reduce her subjects to the sum of their possible meanings, perhaps because she realizes that the way the drag performers manipulate image and fetishes and the iconography of popular culture is for many of them a sophisticated form of humor. The most self-aware of the gay men in this picture revel in the ironies of their social and sexual identities, and Livingston makes us appreciate the comic grace and the strange wisdom of that approach. Like all the best documentary filmmakers, she does her subjects the honor of allowing them to retain some of their mystery. Edited by Jonathan Oppenheim.—T.R. (3/25/91) (Film Forum; through Oct. 1. . . . ¶ Lincoln Plaza; through Oct. 3. . . . ¶ Quad Cinema; starting Oct. 2. . . . ¶ Eastside Cinema; starting Oct. 4.)

**REGARDING HENRY**—Harrison Ford, hot-shot lawyer, takes bullets in the head and shoulder from a corner-market thief. He loses his memory and physical control, regains the ability to talk and walk, and discovers that his long-spurned wife (Annette Bening) and thirteen-year-old daughter (Mikki Allen) are all that's important to him. The writer, Jeffrey Abrams, combines feeble finger-pointing satire of the success-obsessed upper class with life lessons that are hard to swallow. They won't go down past the artificially induced lumps in the throat. The director, Mike Nichols, in his second attempt to wring tears and laughs from *haute bourgeois* marital dramedy, falls flatter than ever—he goes from "Heartburn" to filmmaking arrhythmia. With the exception of an eager beagle named Buddy, this is the worst-performed, limpest, least credible Nichols movie yet. While it purports to attack yuppie values, the hero fulfills the latest yuppie fantasy: chucking everything and starting from square one. A nice trick for those who can afford it.—M.S. (Worldwide Cinemas.)

**Riffraff** (1935)—Jean Harlow and Spencer Tracy as cocky working-class people in love, and Joseph Calleia as the wily Greek who runs the tuna fleet and the cannery. Anita Loos was on the script, and the wisecracks fly, but the direction (by J. Walter Ruben) is weak. M-G-M produced, and the corporate hand is clearly visible: the labor troubles are the result of an outside agitator who comes in with bombs. The film might be used as an index to Hollywood-movie social attitudes of the period.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Oct. 3.)

**The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe**—With Lily Tomlin, directed by John Bailey. (Reviewed in this issue.) (57th St. Playhouse.)

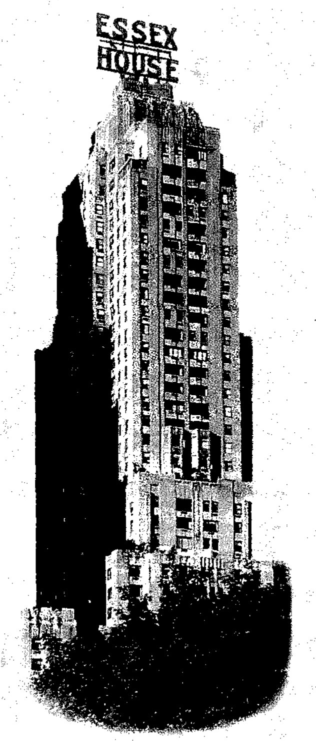
**Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll**—A one-man show in which Eric Bogosian plays, in succession, ten characters, none of whom interact with or refer to any of the others; each inhabits his own eerily self-contained world. The surprising thing about this acting tour de force is that its radically disparate parts really add up to something: in rock-and-roll terms, it's a concept album, not just a collection of singles. This picture, directed (erratically) by John McNaughton, was filmed in concert-movie style, with multiple cameras and before a paying crowd, and Bogosian looks relaxed and confident. In the past, his performances often felt desperate, coercive; he seems more willing now to allow the audience some freedom in responding to his characters. There's a real progression in the course of the film, from characters who provoke immediate, visceral reactions to characters whose effect on us is more ambiguous. Bogosian warms us up with surefire stuff to prepare us for the riskier, more demanding material in the final part of the show. His last three monologues are the funniest in the movie—probably the finest work he has ever done. In them, he manages to lure the audience into very strange emotional territory. We begin to see the poetic sense of the monologuist's bizarre belief systems; we see, that is, why each of the lunatics and fools in this movie is convinced that his skewed perspective is a comprehensive vision of the world. That's an amazing thing for a comic performer to do.—T.R. (9/23/91) (Angelika Film Center, and Worldwide Cinemas.)

**Slacker**—There is no joy in Austin—at least not in the seedy collegiate neighborhood of Richard Linklater's enervating piece of local colorlessness. There's precious little originality, either, despite the resolute nonconformity of Linklater's neo-beatnik characters. Each follows the familiar beat of a different bongo. Sociopaths, Elvis, the J.F.K. assassination, the Lincoln Brigade, Madonna—the same topics come up off campus in Austin as in Cambridge, Mass., or Madison. What's worse, the sophomoric surrealism of the slackers' dialogue is all that Linklater gives you to hang onto. With dozens of one-shot characters who take over for a scene, then pass the baton to the next no-brain, the structure begs comparison to Buñuel's late black comedies, like "The Phantom of Liberty." But watching this movie is more like being stranded in the switchboard of a nightmare party line. The conversational leitmotifs—banal remarks on television and self-serving defenses of passivity—are, well, "heavy." It's tempting to call the film a straightfaced satire, but that would give it too much credit. There's nothing inside Linklater's deadpan.—M.S. (Angelika Film Center.)

**Terminator 2: Judgment Day**—The killer cyborg who was played by Arnold Schwarzenegger in the original "Terminator" (1984) has returned—only this time he's the hero. The first film, which was written and directed by James Cameron, is one of the genre-movie classics of the eighties: a lean, witty science-fiction movie without great pretensions to significance. The sequel, also written (with William Wisher) and directed by Cameron, is far less satisfying. The picture is full of spectacular action sequences and dazzling special effects, but the narrative doesn't have the snap of the original's: it's lumbering and monotonous, and it carries a heavy-handed anti-nuke message. The old, Schwarzenegger-model Terminator (the T-800) has been superseded by a more advanced model, the T-1000 (Robert Patrick), who is sleeker and more versatile. T-800, who represented the ultimate in destructive technology in the first film, seems almost human here: compared to T-1000, he's a vulnerable guy (or guyoid). The whole movie is based on the insane conceit that Arnold Schwarzenegger is the *underdog*. That's a stretch. Also with Linda Hamilton, Edward Furlong, and Joe Morton. Effects by Stan Winston and many, many others.—T.R. (7/29/91) (Loews 19th Street East 6, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Gemini; through Oct. 3.)

**Thelma & Louise**—The heroines, played by Geena Davis (Thelma) and Susan Sarandon (Louise), are a couple of Arkansas women who set out for a weekend in the mountains and wind up speeding through the Southwest, on the run from the law. (Louise has murdered a man who tried to rape Thelma in a roadhouse parking lot.) The movie, written by Callie Khouri and directed by Ridley Scott, is designed to keep pushing the women farther and farther out there—past the point of no return, into the vanishing point of a vast Western landscape, and, finally, over the edge of the world. It's a pretty shameless outlaw fantasy; the feminist justification that the script provides for the heroines' behavior doesn't make their actions any less preposterous. But you can recognize the crudeness of the movie's narrative devices and still have an awfully good time. There's an exhilarating ease and intuitiveness in the way Davis and Sarandon work together, and the camera lingers on them as if it couldn't get enough of them. Scott's direction gives the story a pleasantly dreamy quality: when Thelma and Louise are on the road, the movie has the look of a mirage, a jewelled shimmer that keeps us half hypnotized. He turns Davis and Sarandon into outlaw princesses, and they're so vivid and likable that they carry us past the plot's most obvious contrivances; a little disbelief seems a small price to pay for being allowed to remain in their company. Also with Harvey Keitel, Brad Pitt, Christopher McDonald, Michael Madsen, Timothy Carhart, and Stephen Tobolowsky. The luminous cinematography is by Adrian Biddle.—T.R. (6/3/91) (Murray Hill Cinemas, and 8th St. Playhouse.)

**Trust**—This independent film by the young writer and director Hal Hartley ("The Unbelievable Truth") takes place entirely in a white, middle-class neighborhood in a forlorn-looking Long Island town. His Long Island is a place where anything can happen and almost nothing does—where parents and childen, living together in tight quarters, torment and negotiate with each other just to create some drama for themselves. This picture tells the story of the strange relationship—part romance, part tutorial, part vaudeville act—between a pair of suburban losers, Matthew (Martin Donovan) and Maria (Adrienne Shelly). He's a thirtyish, chain-smoking depressive who lives with his widowed father (John MacKay). She's an adolescent bimbo who, when she announces to her family and her boyfriend that she's pregnant, discovers that this persona isn't going to be much use to her; she decides that she has to change her life. The story moves by surprising leaps, with the rhythm of the main characters' erratic, uncertain progress toward an awareness of possibilities beyond their limited, cramped experience. Hartley keeps the film's tone dry, and makes the threatening, pervasive nothingness of the milieu grotesquely funny. His style is a risky blend of formal abstraction and dramatic realism, and it demands resourceful actors. Donovan has a gangling, dishevelled charm, and his bummed-out line readings are superbly timed; and Shelly brings off Maria's transformation from teen-age temptress to serious young woman with extraordinary ease. Under Hartley's direction, they seem to be inventing an acting style for a brand-new genre: the existentialist comedy of manners. Also with Merritt Nelson, Edie Falco, and Gary Sauer.—T.R. (8/12/91) (Angelika Film Center.)



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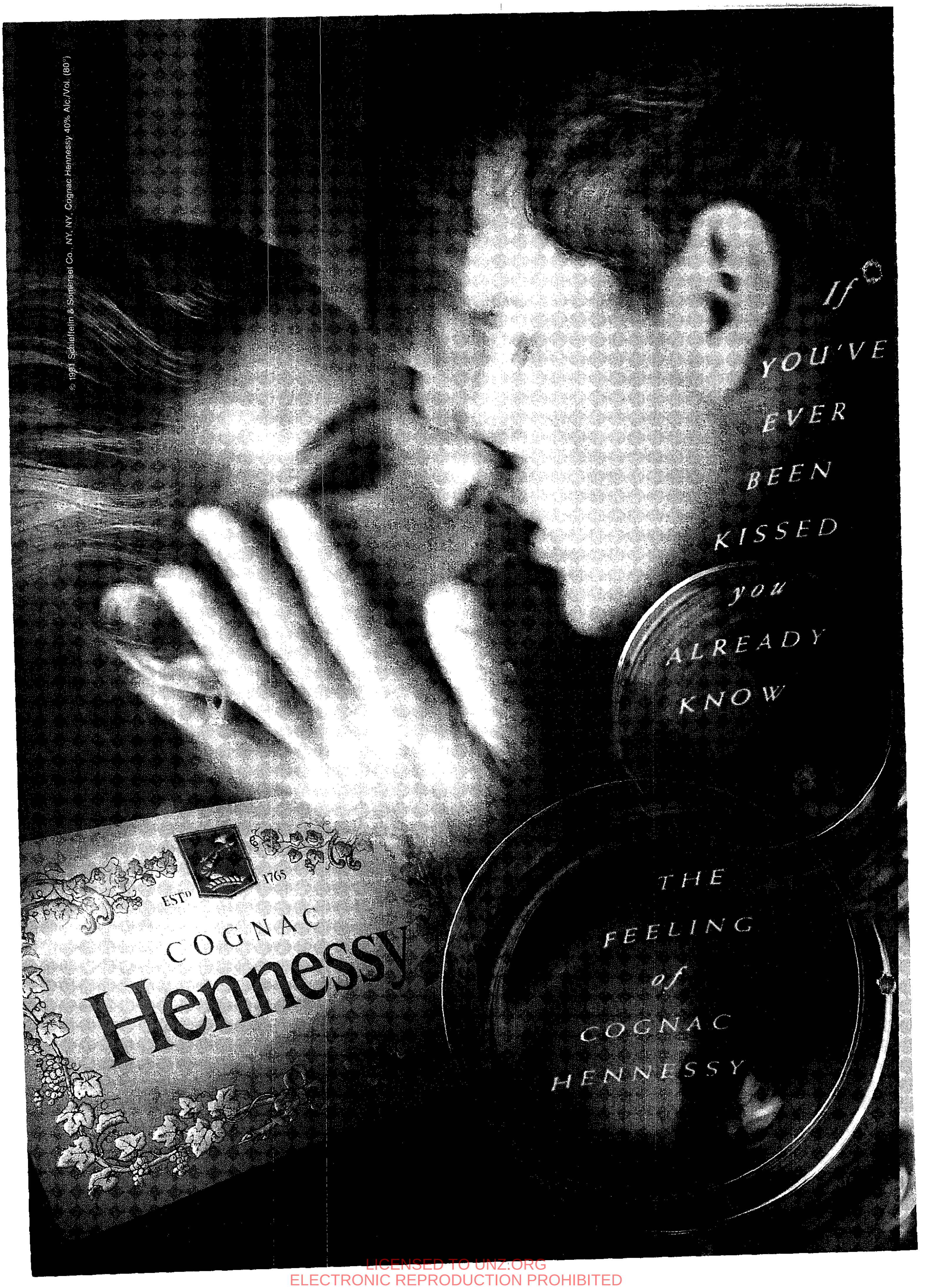
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THE
NEW YORKER

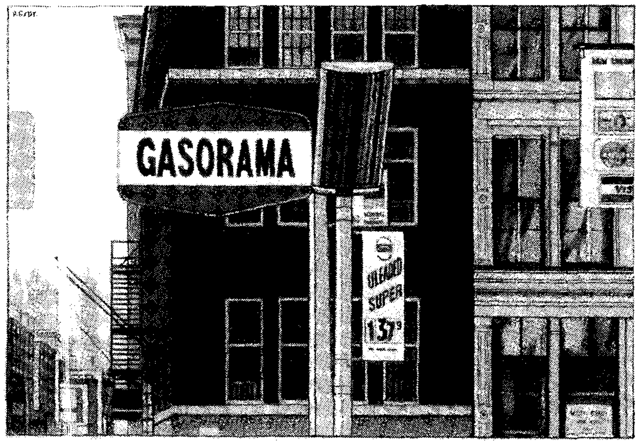
# THE TALK OF THE TOWN

## *Notes and Comment*

A BOOK called "The New Joy of Sex: A Gourmet Guide to Lovemaking for the Nineties," by Dr. Alex Comfort (M.D., D Sc.), arrived on our desk the other morning, and with it came a rush not of titillation but of nostalgia. Our nostalgia was not for sex itself (or, at least, not entirely) but for the old "Joy," which first appeared nearly twenty years ago and sold more than eight million copies, one of them to us. We loved the old "Joy," and we were a little puzzled that anyone felt a need for a new one, since the old "Joy" covered its subject with an encyclopedic thoroughness that could only be described as Borgesian. And so, wondering what new tactics and strategies might have emerged in the years since the old "Joy" was published, we decided to read the new volume right through.

What had changed, of course, was not so much the nature of sex as the nature of joy, which has diminished and altered over the years. "When this book was first written, in 1973, sex was an extremely safe occupation, and any hazards attending it were social and emotional," Dr. Comfort writes in the new edition. "The major venereal diseases, especially syphilis, which had caused death and disability for the previous 400 years, were curable: those which had replaced them, nonspecific urethritis and herpes, though troublesome, were not life-threatening. This picture was changed in the late 1970s by the introduction to Western societies of the disease AIDS. . . . The arrival of this disease totally alters the sexual landscape." Once the safe-sex instruction, complete with pencil drawings of condom application, is out of the way, it is more or less back to business as usual for Dr. Comfort. "There is no occasion for panic, or for losing out on the joy of sex," he announces. Yet the new "Joy" is, as the consequence of a hundred subtle and unsubtle, or even scarcely conscious, revisions, as different from the old "Joy" as it could possibly be, and it was these small, decisive differences that held us to the book.

The old "Joy" was strict Reichian stuff, meaning both Charles and Wilhelm: Consciousness III finding itself in an orgone box. The great outside event of its cosmology was not AIDS but the Pill, which had opened a vista of sexual freedom that seemed to stretch ahead to eternity. But with that hedonism was coupled (so to speak) an odd sense of purposefulness. The original edition was called a Cordon Bleu guide to lovemaking—a reference, no doubt, to the French cooking school for young British matrons who want to learn how to make mille-feuilles and beef Wellington—and was divided, jocosely, into "main courses" and "sauces & pickles." Its governing metaphor, therefore, was not that of the gourmet—of eating or consuming—but that of the chef, cooking and seasoning: *creating*. It inventoried where things fitted and how they could be made to fit differently, but the real pleasure of reading it came from the earnestness of its tone, which suggested a cross between discussion hour at the Summerhill School and a night at a Paris brothel. Odd sexual practices were usually referred to by their French names ("à la paresseuse—the lazy position"), but with a kind of homey awkwardness ("Some women do indeed pass right out, the 'little death' of French poetry") that always reminded us of the strange, affected way English waitresses have of pronouncing "pâté" and "consommé." The old "Joy" was realistic ("Taking an ordinary bath together has a charm of its own, though someone has to lean against the plumbing"), open-minded but practical ("Triangular bandages are all right for quick hand-and-foot tying, but don't look very sexy—and it is the neatness and wriggling of the parcel which excite the active party. Old stockings are a favorite resource but murder to untie quickly in an emergency"), briskly aphoristic (it defined pornography as "the name given to any sexual literature somebody is trying to suppress"), and, above all, English. The culture it was struggling to liberate was referred to unself-consciously as Anglo-Saxon, and the old "Joy" remarked, "Laughs never fail, because sex is funny," adding that if you haven't laughed "you end with boxed ears or tears or no orgasm all round." Pure Mary Poppins, that stern "no orgasm all round"; and those



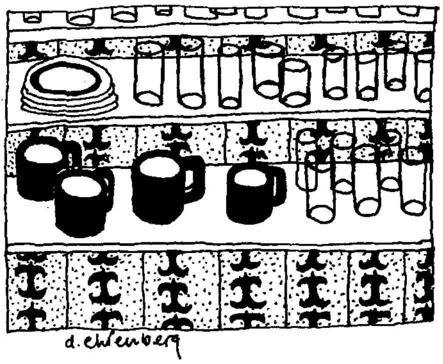
"boxed ears" stayed with us long after other body parts were forgotten.

The old "Joy" was dominated by the old "Joy" couple, as they were presented in more than a hundred black-and-white pencil-sketch illustrations. The publishers praised the artists on the copyright page for their "humor, honesty and directness." They had these things, but their realism was not one of anatomical precision; any Japanese erotic print is far more painstakingly detailed. It was, instead, a pious realism. She was heavy-hipped and rather sharp-nosed, and had one of those terrible early-seventies Jane Fonda haircuts, the kind with straggly ends and a disconsolate little flip. He was sagging around the middle, soft and unathletic, and shorter than she, and he was hairy: his locks were much longer than hers, and he had a full, shaggy wild-man beard—one of those beards that you saw in 1972 on men who only six years before had been close-shaven and clean-cut. The couple's bodies were as white and slack and unmuscled as those of snowmen, and were drawn in simple lines, enlivened inside the contours only by little patches of hair and the occasional suggestion of a navel. But the lovers' desire to transcend their sagging fleshiness through their relentless appetite made them seem spiritual—a new Adam and a new Eve.

In the new "Joy," the couple are rendered in delicately shaded colored pencil. (New printing technologies have apparently had as big an impact on this edition as new contraceptive technologies had on the old "Joy.") The new "Joy" lovers are younger than the old ones, and they have been working out. He has ridge upon ridge of muscle, and his sternum and abdomen are bisected by a single longitudinal line, like that of a Calvin Klein model. When he is seen from behind, the muscles on his back stand out like a chain of hills on a relief map. She is pretty—not conventionally beautiful, and still a little short-legged and wide-hipped, but with delicate, refined features, and a small wardrobe of lace lingerie, and a look of gentle, distanced bemusement at the acrobatics they undertake. He is clean-shaven, and has blond, curly hair, which has obviously been blow-dried and filled with mousse. The old male lover's member, rendered in full-page illustration, emerged as a blunt stub from a swamp of tufts at the southern swell of his paunch; the new man's member fits like a dashboard accessory on his Greek body, and is rendered, in six colors, as a long, vertical shimmering blur.

The old couple's pudgy bodies were alight with purpose. When they took an erotic bath, they were shown wading, hand in hand, out into a pond—Out There, somewhere in a redemptive nature. The new couple are just entertaining themselves: they bathe in a molded bathtub with shining chrome plumbing and Conran's-style bath accessories. The old couple, when they bound each other to the bed, did so on a tiny, unmade, and obviously far too short institutional bed; the new couple bind each other to a brass bed the size of your front lawn, made up with pastel sheets and sprinkled with countless down pillows. The old couple had no home or furnishings; their love and the blank page were all they knew. The new couple have a bedroom decorated with nicely framed lithographs and healthy plants in terra-cotta planters; their night table holds a bottle of Perrier and a silver candlestick. They are tender with each other, and spend a great deal of time dreamily admiring each other's bodies. The old couple were far too busy for such mutual admiration: they slammed their hairy and sweating selves together, fell down exhausted, and then rose again, ready for another engagement.

A section about her sensibilities has been moved from page 96 in the old book to the beginning of the new one. There is a picture of her, naked but obviously a capable, career-minded person, standing proudly in front of her framed lithos, next to the legend "Nobody can be a good lover if he doesn't regard women as (a) people and (b) equals," and there is a good deal of talk about reciprocity, and so on. The new "Joy" also includes a roster of ethnic variations. Sex, which twenty years ago was the grand cultural universal, the common language of mankind, has suddenly gone multicultural, like the curriculum. The new "Joy" adds to the detailed descriptions of Chinese, Indian, Japanese, and Turkish techniques three separate varieties of South Slav sexual styles: the Serbian (*Srpski jeb*), the Croatian (*hrvastski jeb*), and something called the Lion position. Dr. Comfort says of Balkan sex, "The style is passionate and affectionate as befits a race of bride-stealing warriors whose women were and still are, natural partisans: tough plus tender." That there are no Estonian or other Baltic styles we put down only to the press of deadlines.



"Sexual behavior probably changes remarkably little over the years—sexual revolutions and moral backlashes chiefly affect the degree of frankness or reticence about what people do in private," Dr. Comfort writes in the new "Joy." But after ruminating on his two editions we are inclined to think that sex, like all other things, bears the imprint of its period. As sex is catalogued for us now, it seems limited in its ambition, narrow in its compass, beset by petty nationalism, and occasionally lethal—not at all unlike the new world in which it will have to find its joy.

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## *The Sweep of Time*

SHOULD you feel compelled, as we did on a recent Thursday, to spend the afternoon browsing through a museum devoted exclusively to computers and their ham-fingered forebears, calculating machines, you would have two choices in the whole world. One is the Computer Museum, on Congress Street in Boston, which opened in November of 1984, receives about a hundred and fifty thousand visitors a year, charges six dollars for adults, and occupies fifty-three thousand square feet, including offices, galleries, a two-hundred-and-seventy-five-seat auditorium, and an amply stocked store. The other is the American Computer Museum, on Babcock Street in Bozeman, Montana: May of 1990, three thousand visitors a year, two bucks, and

*"He hasn't been the same since Hurricane Bob."*

two thousand square feet, comprising three exhibition rooms and a reception area/office/shop the size of six huddled refrigerators. We were happy to find ourself in the latter museum—and not just because it shares a small building with a liquor store (we're talking about a bright Indian-summer Thursday, made to order for gin-and-tonic sundowners), or because Bozeman's traffic is lighter than Boston's. We liked the American Computer Museum because it is run by George Keremedjiev, who is affable, knowledgeable, horse-sensible, and less enthusiastic about himself than about his neck of the technological woods. "I'm a factory-automation consultant for the metal-forming/metal-stamping industry," he told us after some prodding. "I contribute articles to professional journals and write a monthly column for *Metal Forming* magazine. I tend to get described as the country's expert on the uses of robotics and electronics in metal forming, but you know how people go on."

George is thirty-eight years old and is a near-ringer for Roger Ebert. He was born in Venezuela to Russian émigrés, and he spoke nothing but Russian and Spanish until his family moved to Paterson, New Jersey in 1962. "I got my first exposure to a computer in 1969, in high school," he said. "We were part of a pilot program, and the school got a Digital Equipment Corporation PDP-8/L." The PDP-8/L sold for eight and a half thousand 1969 dollars, was the size of a footlocker, and had a four-thousand-byte memory. (The memory of any personal computer worth its salt today holds a hundred and sixty times that.) "You know what stunned me about that PDP-8/L?" George went on. "You have to remember, my parents left Russia because of Stalin's purges—they were under suspicion because they had been German prisoners of war. I realized, working with that computer, that I, a mere high-school student, had in my hands the same amount of power—of potential knowledge—that not too many years earlier was the exclusive property of national governments."

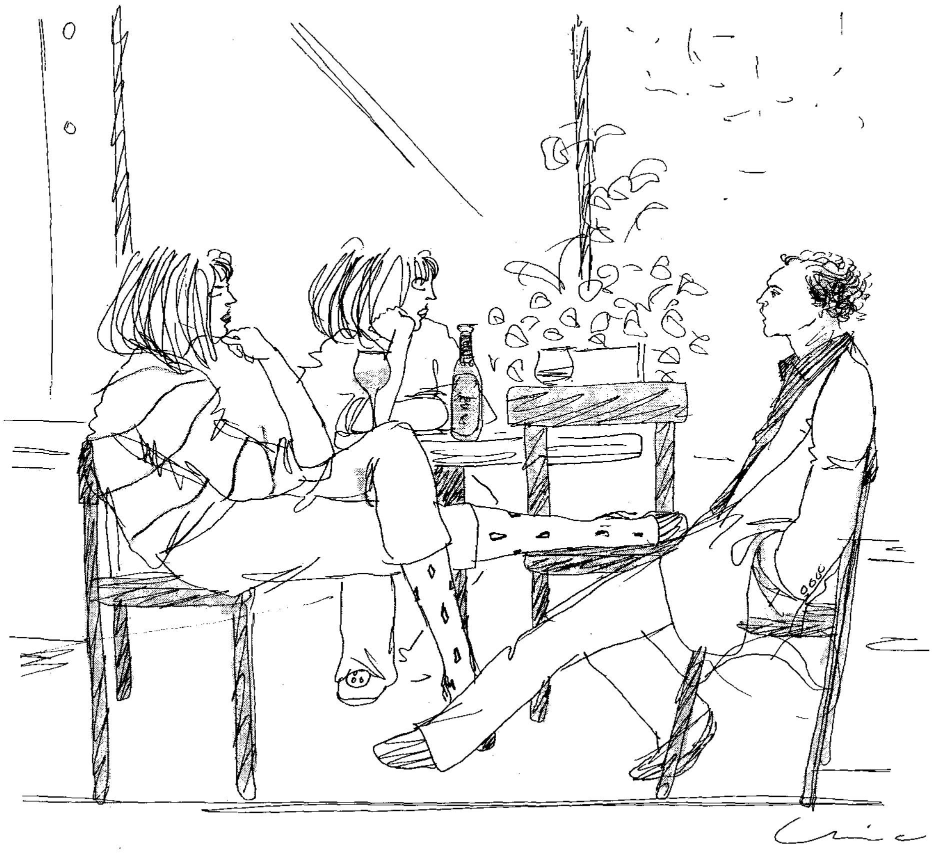
George matriculated at Rutgers and began studying electrical engineering, then changed his major to music, with an unofficial minor in physics. "I wanted to go into acoustics and design speakers, but after graduation I began working in electronics," he said. "My wife and I were living in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, outside Philadelphia, and one day, in an antique store, I ran across a 1914 German adding machine, and I bought it. I started scouring antique stores and flea markets. I was interested in both mechanical and early electronic calculators, and they were almost always hidden away. Most dealers thought they were without value, and most flea-market venders thought they were too cumbersome to lug around. I'd rummage through dishes and china and old clothes, and if I was lucky I'd find something. There's a small group of collectors now, but during the last few years the devices have been getting harder and harder to find. They're in junk heaps. The window of opportunity of the early nineteen-eighties has shut. Anyway, my wife and I decided to start a museum. We made a thorough study of clean, crime-free towns that were close to nature and had good airline connections and a reasonable amount of tourist traffic. Bozeman won out over Princeton."

George paused for a moment and said, "Electronics and computing is about the only industry whose products keep getting more compact, less expensive, and more powerful. Compare computers with automobiles!" He picked up from his desk a plastic calculator half the size of a checkbook. "This cost me seven dollars. In 1970, it would have been the size of this book"—he held up A. N. Wilson's biography of Tolstoy—"and would have cost four hundred dollars, without the square-root or per-cent function. My computer at home—we have four, really, one desk-top and three portables—has more power than everything in this place put together. The museum is part of an inner mandate to help people, especially youngsters, appreciate technology by learning about the history of technology. They throw a quarter in a video game without realizing how that game got there, what it means, what its context is. Look at this, for instance." He took off his watch, a three-handed Timex, and held it out. "This watch is the best of both worlds. The internal circuits are chip-driven, digital, but the display is pure analog. It's important to me to see all the hours out there at once, in relation to each other. Rather than the notations of single moments, I prefer the sweep of time."

The museum is arranged chronologically. It begins with paintings that show Egyptian hieroglyphics and Roman and Hindu-Arabic numerals ("The Hindus perfected the decimal number system, including zero," George said. "That made all the difference in the world") and ends with a robotic arm that picks up wooden alphabet blocks and sets them in a row, to spell "ROBOT."

We wandered along the museum's time line, lingering over the Millionaire, an 1895 calculator the size of a camp stove and as heavy as a stone; a Burroughs-adding-machine magazine advertisement from 1920 that said "Don't be an adding machine, Buy One"; the Executive Monroe, a 1929 portable adding machine that came in a handsome leather case; a nineteenth-century photograph of Charles Babbage, generally considered the father of the computer, and one of Augusta Ada Byron, Lord Byron's daughter and Babbage's colleague, whom George considers the first computer programmer; early transistors; an I.B.M. System 3 computer from 1971 that, with its printer, is too big to fit into George's office; hard drives the size of movie projectors; a lineup of early Apples and Commodores; a 1975 I.B.M. advertised as portable, a claim that seemed to us accurate only if you happen to be a llama; a Japanese calculator with an abacus attached (some merchants use the abacus for addition and subtraction and the calculator for multiplication and division); and an array of toys and games—Pong, computer football, the AD-O-MASTER jr., the Brain Baffler, and Consul, the Educated Monkey.

What tugged at us hardest, however, were the dinosaurs and Neanderthals of computer evolution: punch cards; vacuum tubes; a reel of metal tape from an early UNIVAC; slide rules for all sorts of professions; and, our favorite of all, the Mathatron. The Mathatron was promoted as the world's first programmable electronic desk-top calculator. "They laughed when I sat down to play my Mathatron," a magazine ad read. If you had five thousand dollars in 1965 and a very large, strong desk, the Mathatron, which is about the size of a huge suitcase, was yours. We liked it partly because its metal skin and plastic keys came in some of the same matte bright colors—turquoise, black, red, yellow, and white—as the customized interior of a '65 Chevy Bel Air in which we had spent a lot of quality time. But, beyond that, we were struck by its innocent self-confidence. The Mathatron was like an outstanding teen-age athlete—it would never have believed tales of its own mortality.



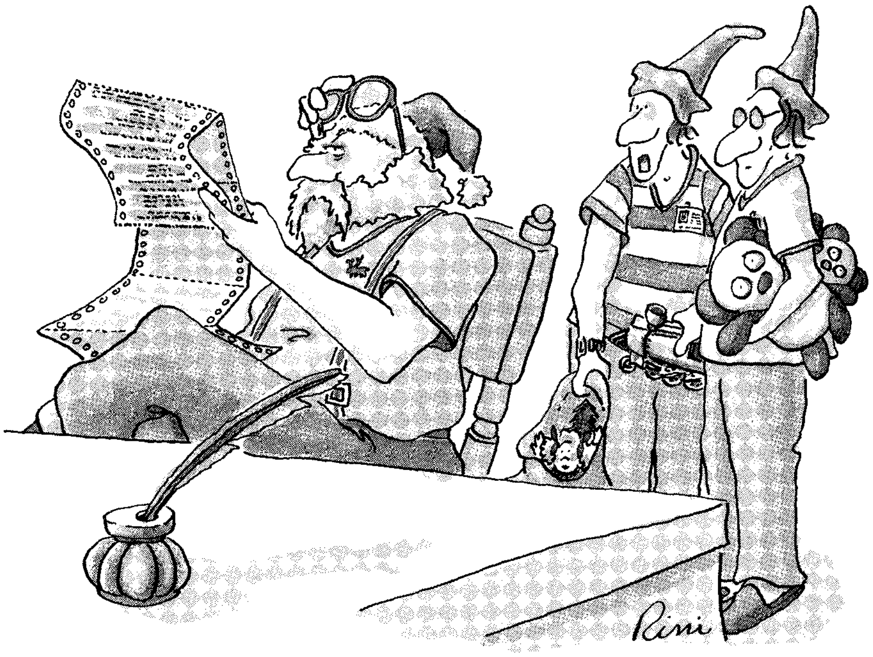
"New York is amazing for movies and women."

"It works," George said, shooing some dust from its chassis. "But I leave it alone. I plugged it in not long after I got it, and the lights all over the house dimmed."

## *Extensions*

BARBARA TERRY'S DREAM: Several years ago, Barbara Terry dreamed that she was walking along Seventh Avenue in Harlem and saw dozens of women parading down the street in fancy clothes, looking great except that the backs of their heads were missing. A voice then said to her "Barbara, *you* have to do their hair!" Ms. Terry said "How?" and the voice answered "You have to braid it." Ms. Terry then woke up, went to the store, bought a sixty-four-ounce Pepsi, went over to her mother's house, woke up her little sister, cut up an old wig, braided the wig hairs into her sister's hair so that it was styled into eight braids, and realized that she had just invented extension hair braiding—the use of synthetic fibres to extend short, broken-off, overprocessed hair and make it more manageable. About that experience Ms. Terry now says, "I'm a person who really gets into her dreams."

HAIR FACTS, ABOUT AND ACCORDING TO BARBARA TERRY: Her grandfather was a barber in the Panama Canal Zone. Her father ran Nelson's Tonsorial Parlor in the Bronx. As a child, Ms. Terry would walk around with a comb in her pocket, and let's say she was talking to you, and your bangs had got messed up—she'd just whip out her comb and fix them for you. As a young woman, in 1961, she invented the Afro when she was rushing out for a date: she didn't have time to hot-press and curl her hair, so she let it dry naturally and fluffed it out, and then found she preferred it that way. People used to stop their cars and curse her for wearing an Afro. She started wearing dreadlocks a few years later, when she was in a hurry to get to



*"It's the quarterly estimated Christmas list from some kid on Central Park West."*

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Harlem after hearing about the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and decided to twist her hair into separate clumpy sections and let it dry. People used to stop their cars and curse her for wearing dreadlocks. Some friends of hers who live in the Poconos told her recently that putting a circle of hair clippings around the edge of their property seemed to scare the deer away. "I could have made a gazillion dollars by now if I'd been saving hair clippings and selling them to people upstate," Ms. Terry says. "With extension braiding, though, I'm more interested in putting hair on people's heads than in taking it off."

Certain Things a Professional Hair-Braider Knows for Sure: The other afternoon, Ms. Terry was in her apartment, in the Bronx, along with T'Vohnah Benyahmeen, to whom she was teaching extension braiding on a mannequin head named Betty. Betty's hair was chestnut-colored with bleached spots; it appeared to have been whacked off somewhat randomly. Ms. Terry's hair, which is about seventy per cent her own and thirty per cent extensions, was arranged in what she described as "a few hundred individual plaits worn with a little slide bang, with a pompadour and a side ponytail." Ms. Benyahmeen, whose braids had been done by Ms. Terry about a month earlier, was wearing them pulled up into what Ms. Terry described as "a kind of Nordic, 'I Remember Mama' wholesome, cute kind of I'm-not-going-to-misbehave kind of thing." While the two women were braiding monocrylic fibres from a package marked "California Fashions Coarsened Braid" into Betty's hair, they discussed the hair issue as it pertains to some well-known individuals.

Ms. Benyahmeen: "Janet Jackson?"

Ms. Terry: "Not her real hair."

"Whitney Houston?"

"That's not her hair."

"Robin Givens? When she was dating Mike Tyson?"

"That's not her hair."

"Patti LaBelle?"

"Everyone *knows* that's not her hair."

Historically and Factually Speaking: Extension braids can be styled as African string curls, Egyptian twists, Senegalese twists, Nubian twists, basic cornrows, individual plaits, and New York pix, or they can be fashioned using the interlock method, which Ms. Terry happens to hate and doesn't like to do. "I've revised my technique six times," she says. "My system is called the Songa Original Undetectable Extension Hair Braiding Technique. The whole point of it is neatness. When you take a scrambled mess of hair and make an ordered creation out of it, that's a work of art. Woolly hair is very unusual. It can be woolly or straight: if you shape it into a duck when it's wet, it'll dry in the shape of a duck. It's very sensitive to humidity: if you're wearing an Afro on a humid night, you might go to a party looking like Angela Davis and leave looking like Miriam Makeba. Your hair might change shape in the middle of a sentence. Extension braiding gives it length and structure and lets you do anything with it. It takes hours to get braided, but the braids last six or eight weeks, through dozens of shampoos, and during that time you can get on with your life. While I'm braiding, I say to myself, 'This lady has come to me looking like a plucked chicken and I want to help her.' I'm the pioneer extension braider in the country. I've written a book about it, called 'Professional Secrets: How to Do Extension Hair Braiding.' I used to have two salons in Harlem, and one was open twenty-four hours a day. While we braiders were working, we'd turn on the television and discuss and debate Oprah, or we'd put on old tapes of the show I host on cable television, called 'Harlem Here It Is.' I closed my salons when Reagan came into office, because I knew no one would have any money. Now I teach braiders, lecture about braiding, and wholesale my braid-care products, and I'm opening my Songa Too salon franchises in Florida, Ohio, and Chicago. I'd like to open a museum of African beauty in Harlem. Black people ruined their hair pressing and perming it, all because they were trying to look like Donna Reed. That's *over*. Extension braiding is the biggest thing since bubble gum."

Likely Future Developments in African-American Hair and Some Final Commentary: Ms. Terry thinks that the next trend in hair styling will probably be baldness. "Toxic chemicals, pollution—no one will have any hair left or any time to fix it," she explains. "In the meantime, I've figured out a way to restore hair to bald heads. I'm forever trying to maximize what people have. I couldn't help but look at someone like Pearl Bailey and think, After all those years, wouldn't you expect her hair to be longer than *that*? That dinky little inch or so? I know I could have done something for her. During your celibate years, you come up with great ideas."

# A KINGDOM OF SADNESS

S.L. fell ill in the summer of 1939. If I look into that sentence (or behind that sentence, so to speak) I find I might say at some length that S.L. fell ill in the summer of 1939 not in the sense of a fever, but he had a stroke while he was driving to Chicago in a year-old tan Chevrolet two-door coach: that was the name of the body style back then; it was cheaper than a coupé—it was the cheapest car he had ever owned.

I don't know what the pain was like. People told me later that it had been extreme but he had managed in spite of it to drive on and ask directions to a Veterans hospital and then to drive there; and he had collapsed only on the steps in front of the doors of the hospital—which had not yet opened for the day.

He was unconscious for weeks, I was told.... I never saw the hospital records. Tan was his favorite color in suits and ties and in cars the year he *fell ill*....

He wasn't just driving to Chicago—he'd left Lila. And us, the kids. For good, he'd said. He was through. Lila told us this in a certain tone of voice, private-but-public, tearful, defiant, indomitable, domitable. Human and personal. And like Irene Dunne. She did it for a few select listeners: *S.L.'s left me.... It isn't a joke this time.*

Daddy told Nonie in the spring of that year, when she was to graduate from high school, that he hadn't the money to send her to college. She would have to get a scholarship or work her way through. But as she herself said, she was not scholarship material and she did not want to work in front of girls who did not have to work, whose fathers had sent them to school in a haze of luxury, husband-hunting. Daddy told her she was a pretty girl and didn't need college and it would be best if she went to work. He said that daydreams didn't enter into it; her grades weren't high (they were very poor) and he was strained *to the uttermost* (his phrase); the world was *going to hell in a handbasket*—war was coming; the American Nazis made his life difficult as a small-town Croesus-entrepreneur (with no money). The Depression had not lifted. She could help him by going to work. He was at his wit's end as it was without finding more sums to send her to college on a fool's errand.

He had said, always, that he would find the money for Nonie to go to school. He had given her no warning that the promise was rescinded—Lila said he had sneaked into this out of cowardice toward Nonie and the situation.

Lila tried to help Nonie; she told S.L. to go rob a bank if he had to. A real man did whatever was necessary for his family; he had given Nonie his word.

And Nonie, in a different voice, with much greater intensity, begged him, then commanded him, to do just that, to steal the money. It was almost funny, the somewhat pretty-but-fierce way in which she meant it.

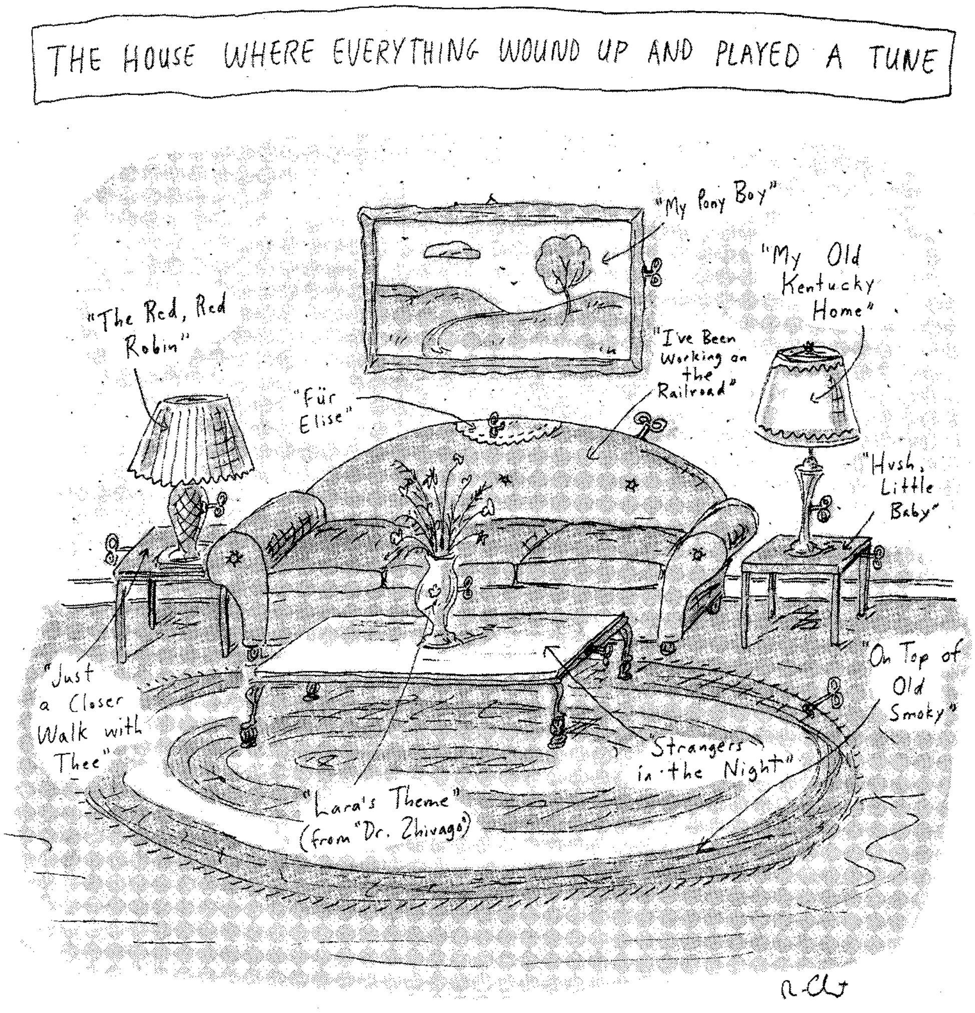
He said to her, "I'm not going to wreck myself for your sake.... You have to go to work.... No one wants to give you money to go to college.... Not Grandma, not Casey"—his sister who was rich, Nonie's aunt. He grew cruel trying to end the scene and her tears: he'd tried to raise the money for her, he said, "but everyone I go to says the same thing: Don't try to make a silk purse from a sow's ear."

Nonie's high-colored face went white. We knew, I knew by then, I was nine, that S.L. was often snobbish, often cruel, and that he often lied—that he had done genuinely shameful things, whatever his pretensions with us were, and that he was not a model of rationality or of judgment.

And that he was perpetually embarrassed. Or close to being embarrassed. Or enraged. He intended her to forgive him.

She said, "I'll become a streetwalker.... I hate you.... I'll marry a rich man, and I hope you starve."

She wasn't restrained when she said it. She yelled and screamed and sobbed when she fought with him. She said to him, "You lied to me, you're


THE HOUSE WHERE EVERYTHING WOUND UP AND PLAYED A TUNE
"My Pony Boy"
"My Old Kentucky Home"
"The Red, Red Robin"
"I've Been Working on the Railroad"
"Für Elise"
"Hush, Little Baby"
"On Top of Old Smoky"
"Just a Closer Walk with Thee"
"Strangers in the Night"
"Lara's Theme" (from "Dr. Zhivago")

no good, everyone will have the last laugh over me now."

"A girl like you shouldn't have enemies," Daddy said. "A sweetheart like you, Little Miss Sweetie Pie." Ironic. Tricky. You know?

We were all more grown-up than we had been.

Lila said, "Unhappiness is not funny—she trusted you, S.L. You broke her heart. . . . You lead her to expect you'll take care of things and you let her down. . . . Now you see what it's like to be taken care of by you—see what you've done to me? Well, what do you expect of her? What do you expect her to do? What can she do when you're the way you are?"

"Christ!" Then: "Have some mercy on me," he said dryly. "And let's have some silence."

Lila refused. She and Nonie both refused to let the issue go. No silence supervened—at all. They cornered him—Lila accused him of having no feelings for anyone but himself, and he began to shout, purple-faced, thunderous. He had considerable power. When he shouted back at her, she flinched. He shouted at Nonie, too.

But he hadn't enough say-so to silence them. Nonie, like David with Goliath, advanced on him; Nonie called him names; she said, "You're weak and stupid and a liar." Daddy got a look that I associate with nightmares—the hurt-cum-anger, the being past most, or all, caring: the approach of limitlessness. "You have destroyed my life, Daddy," Nonie said.

I saw the *logic* then of his *feeling* he had nothing further to destroy in her. "I never expected to hear such talk from a daughter," he said. "Maybe you're not *my* daughter—maybe you're trash like your mother's family. Did you ever think of that?"

Then she slapped him.

He looked at her with disgust—disgust-and-rage, disgust-and-hurt; but he didn't hit her back. He said, "You're no good. . . ." He said it simply.

And she said it back to him: "YOU'RE no good. . . ." With mounting hysteria.

He was still holding his face. He said to the air, "She's no good. . . . It's all no good. I'm through with her. . . ."

The yelling continued in conversational tones—the pain, the weird strain of debacle, of failure. And Nonie would shout, "I HATE HIM. HE'S A FOOL!"

He would be sitting there.

In the kitchen, Nonie palely went down on her knees to hug me sweatily and murmur, "I think I am going to die. . . . I won't give in, I won't. . . ." I was somewhat, a tiny bit, on her side: parents shouldn't break promises. . . . Of course, I had an interest in that issue. But neither she nor Momma in scenes that went on for days could drive him now to try again to raise the money, and he didn't care that I felt the issue mattered. Oh, he was hurt. Daddy would come in the side door of the house and tiptoe to the door of my room and beckon to me to come to him; and sometimes I went; but if I went he would hug me too hard, and he smelled of nerves and of sadness—and of cigars; and he would drag me back into my room, no matter how I protested or kicked, and onto *my* bed; and he would imprison me and lie down; he would lie there and against my will hold me near the thudding of his heart; and he would complain about the women—and about me and promises—and he would whisper fragments of poetry about *late and soon, getting and spending*.

And he would say, "It is the end of the world, Wileykins. . . . They have *gouged* me high and dry, they have wrung me for a loop, they have no love or respect in them."

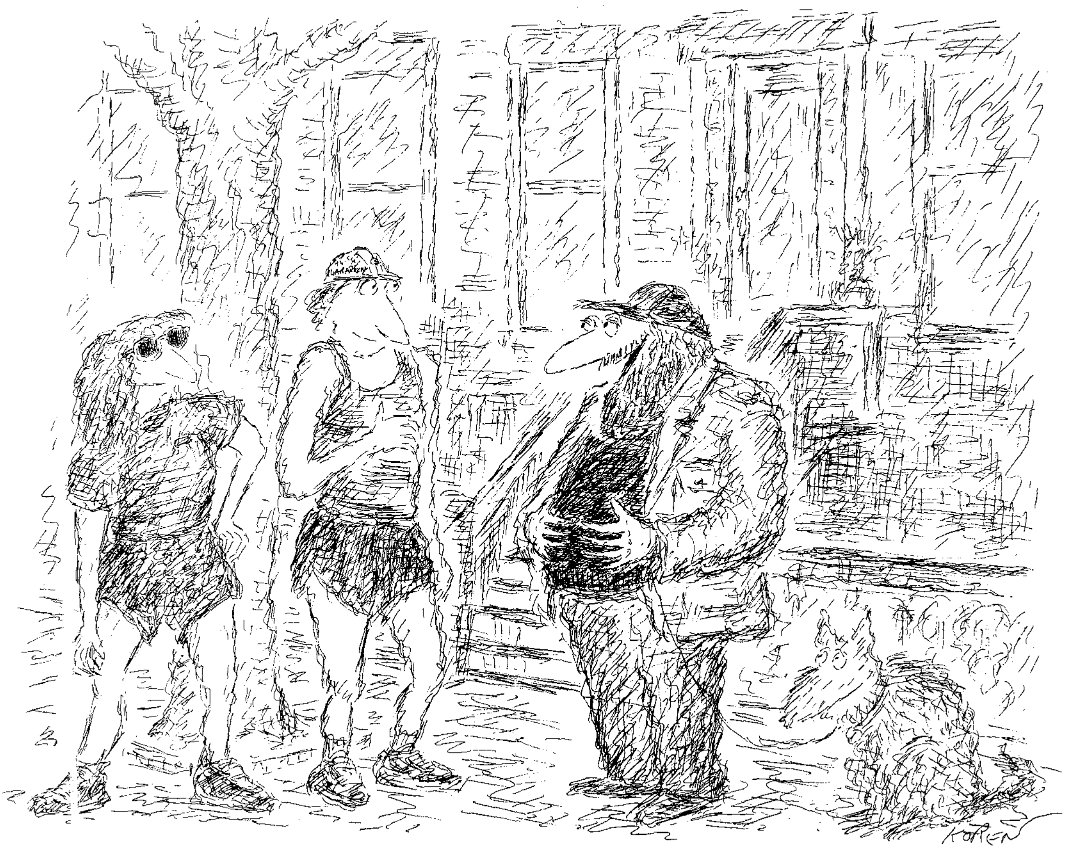
But he was monstrous with being in the wrong. And I couldn't bear to be held like that. I couldn't bear to be near him. "You shouldn't have told Nonie those things."

"Don't you start. . . ."

"YOU SAID SHE WAS YOUR PET AND SHE SHOULD NEVER WORRY."

"Give me a hug," he said. "Don't talk like a woman."

I was silent and waited to get away from him. He would hold me too



*"While you've been out tormenting your bodies, I've been enjoying an active and satisfying gastric life."*

• •

tightly, too watchfully, for me to be able to get away easily; but I would not submit.

And by then he knew better than to go too far in trying to break my will. . . . The school was interested in me; and so was my real father.

S.L. said man to man, "You don't care about money. You never ask me for money. Wiley, they are killing me. . . . Be nice to me." My real father sent money that paid for me by then. I would wiggle out of Daddy's grasp and run from the room, from the house, until the middle of the night.

They hurt him as much as they could, in order to win. Nonie would yell (at them both but particularly at Daddy), "WHAT AM I GOING TO DO NOW?"

I slept with a pillow over my head in order *not* to hear the nighttime scenes. But the night he left, I heard the side door *slam*. . . . How dark it was. The slammed door echoing: it echoes still, the sound of the wood, hollow wood in a ten-year-old house, the rattle of the metal doorknob, the hardware. I feel the dark. And my heart pound. Far off, the trunk lid of the Chevy bangs—a peculiar, compressive sound; and then the metal, the air sound, appears—in my ear, in my head—and then the rubber-and-metal clang and the tinkling whistle, the dim cling-clang of the chrome ornaments that go with the basic sound. Then the car door—then silence—then the motor's lurching whine and the eventual throb moving in the peculiar cavern under the house which is the garage and out into the air behind the house and then on the driveway that runs alongside the house; it passes under my bedroom window—a close-by rustling that stirs the window screen—and then among the night sounds of the tree-lined street the buzz and drone of distances: *Say goodbye to your father, dear*. . . .

Or your dear father . . . if he is dear. . . .

How strange the world is. I feel it when I am forced to acknowledge the newness of circumstances. A newness almost unidentifiable in the general almost-familiarity of your own breathing, but still scary and unidentifiable in the other way of the horror of being alone; then your own breath begins to seem strange to you.

Lila said, "Don't tell anyone he's gone. Be a help, not a hindrance."

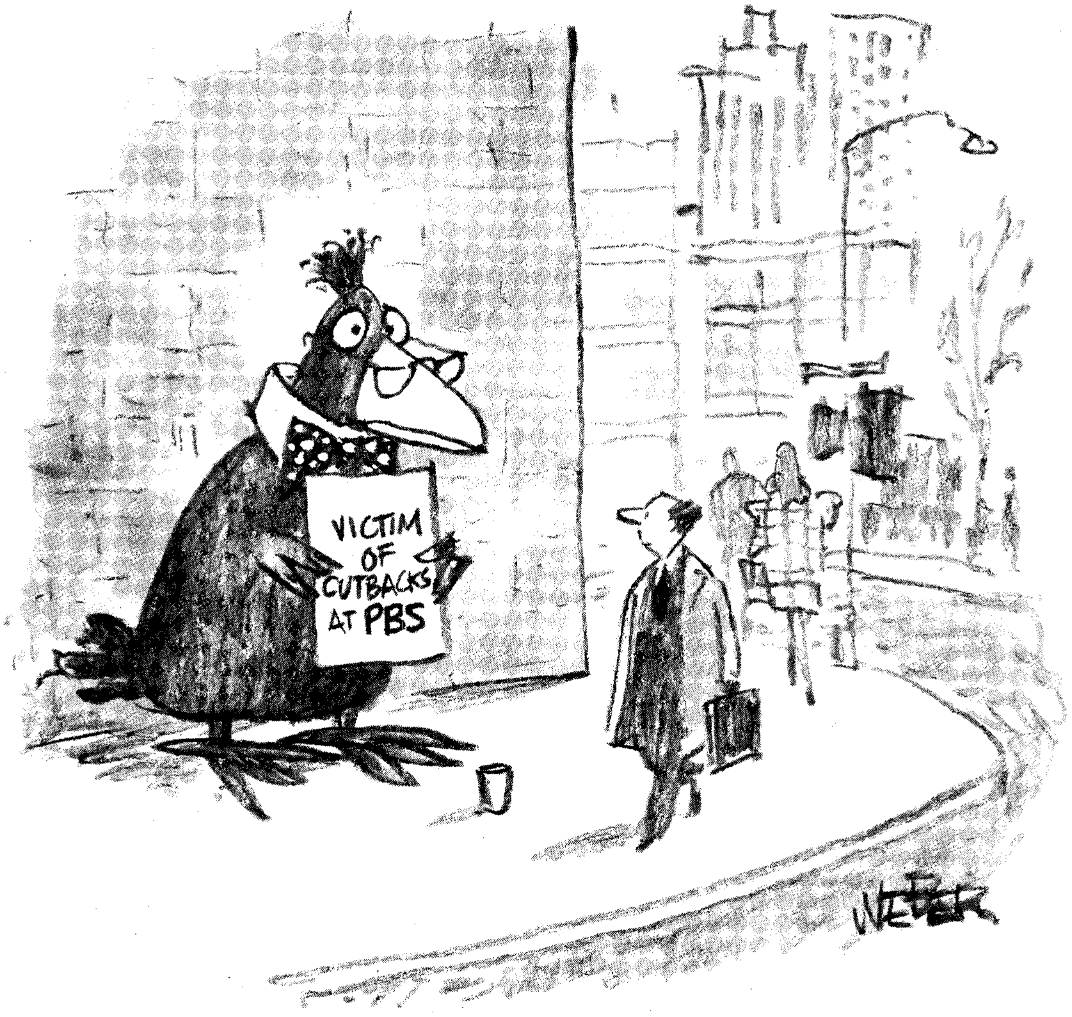
A day or two later, she said, "Do me a favor and clean up after yourself." She was sort of excited and bossy. And defiant. She couldn't help blaming Nonie for having driven S.L. away.

Nonie was angry—pale-nerved and wild-nerved, maybe horrified, but unsorry, a bit burning-eyed, finally and ultimately and forever now obstinate: a realist.

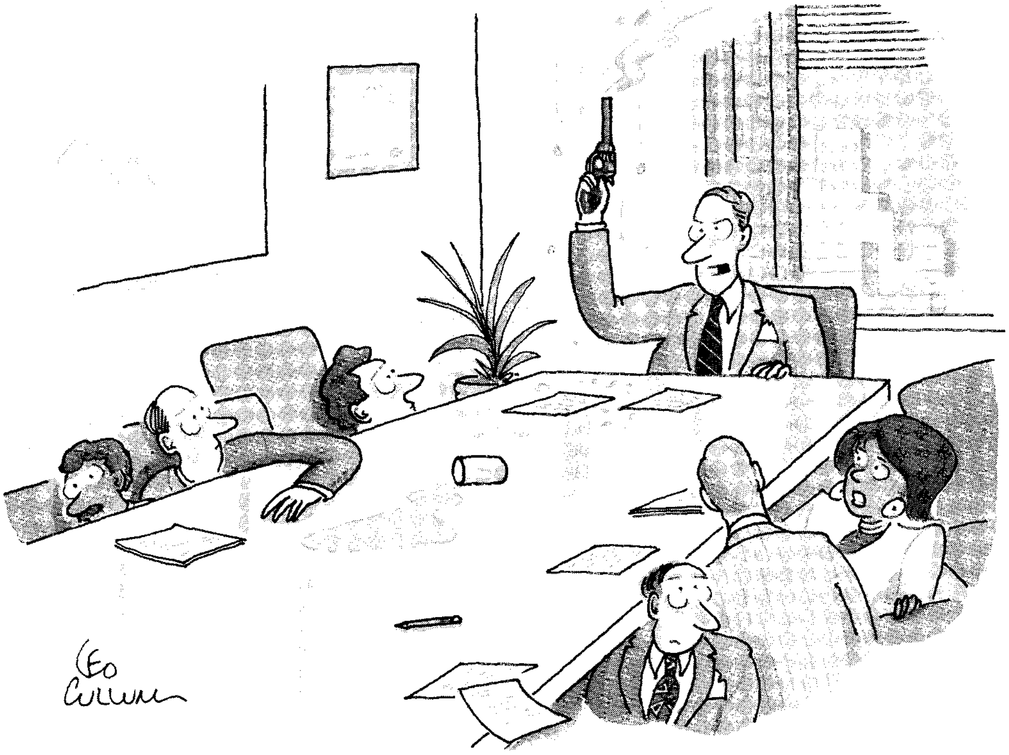
LILA said to her, "Don't show off—let's see what you're made of, we'll see what your mettle is." Nonie found a job and went to work every day and was steady and reliable. Lila took a job two weeks later—she "got friendly" with some man who liked her and she became an insurance agent, working for him—but she was *temperamental* and did not always go in to work, and she was often late: she was moody and self-important. She said the men all wanted to sleep with a woman "at least once just to show they got their money's worth." She was incredibly bitter and would not tell me why. Her mettle was not as good as Nonie's in some ways.

She did say, "I'm not the best-looking woman in the world, but I have a little oomph, and they take it for granted that if I want their business they can have me if they want me. Well, they've got another think coming, I'll tell the world. The way they carry on, you'd think I had no say, no feelings, no opinions . . . no connections. S.L.'s gone, but I'm not alone in the world. Wiley, how far do you think a mother should go to make a big sale of insurance?"

Her commission would come in over a period of years, she said. "It isn't laughable, but what is it worth to earn two hundred


VICTIM OF CUTBACKS AT PBS
WEBER

and fifty dollars a year in commissions from my business with them? Is it worth my self-respect? I like to do what I want to do." She'd be lying on the couch in the front room in the silent house with no lights on, to save money on electricity, and she'd be talking about this stuff.



*"But I digress."*

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Nonie, walking a little like a hunchback—Nonie kept to herself, wounded in her moneylessness; and she read novels about girls who rose in the world on their own efforts, read, mouthing the words; and she played the radio and spoke about the money that radio stars earned. Her posture was bad, Momma kept saying; it had always been good. *Don't lose your nerve now,* Momma would say. Nonie mostly ignored me and Momma. She did not become engaged to any of the men interested in her. "She's kept her nerve that way, anyway," Momma said. "I don't know if I'm coming or going. . . Do you know if I'm coming or going, *pisher*?"

Nonie boasted how good she was at office work—at office politics—and she was, too. She was soon promoted and given a raise and encouraged to stay, but other people were eager to employ her and she switched jobs for a still better salary. She didn't exactly make wisecracks but she sort of did. She went to night school to learn to better her office skills—she studied psychology and English Composition and filing methods.

I wasn't good or loyal—I stayed away from the house; I stayed at friends' houses. At home, our home, the women of my family—flayed, exposed—horrified me; and I helped some but did not really *chip in;* and I wasn't really loving or kind. I said, "You were too hard on Daddy."

Five weeks after Daddy left, when no message had come from him, Lila announced to the world (around us; the world in which everyone already knew S.L. had gone) that he had left her and that he intended to be horrible and tough and not do it in a clean way. He had just disappeared—which was embarrassing.

A number of family meetings were held, and Momma told me—in the kitchen, where we were eating coffee cake she'd made; she could bake but not cook—"It's all decided: I divorce him and get around and take a look and choose someone a little more reliable and I marry *HIM*. Meanwhile, Momma and my brothers will give me an allowance."

I wasn't included in the family conferences—I resented that. My real father came to see me and said I could come live with him. Lila did not object, but my real brother did. I did, too—somewhat. Enough is enough—in the way of changes in one's family.

At any rate, my father-by-blood sent money for my expenses and he telephoned me and he came to see me six or seven times to try to persuade me to come live with him. I did not want to leave my school or to entrust myself to him. Precociously, under the circumstances, I negotiated a treaty with Lila: she was not to boss me around anymore or I would leave and take my real father's money for myself—she mostly or entirely embezzled it for herself now.

I delivered papers and mowed lawns. I tutored—young as I was. Some relatives and one or two local professors (*who want to make experiments on you to see if you're crazy or not,* Nonie said) offered to take me in. If I would convert, the choice was much wider. The local Jesuits made a firm effort to recruit me—*young as I was.* "I bet you'd like being a Catholic," Nonie said. "Why don't you try it and see?"

My real father's older brother offered to take me if I would become Orthodox (Jewish). These matters confused, bothered, upset me. I became aware of a curious measure I used: I measured people by how much pain they saw in me without letting up or offering some sort of consolation. Or mercy. Rough mercy was better than nothing, but it wasn't desirable. Momma's divorce lawyer proposed to her—or so she said. . . . She was something of a fabulist at this point.

She said the lawyer wore too much cologne and kissed like a log and had no idea how to treat women. But he had a Cadillac, and I thought he was a good bet for her; and we could have been a family again. And I could drive the Cadillac.

Momma said she could not make up her mind to accept the lawyer. "Nonie and I don't like each other. And you, I know nothing about boys. . . . S.L. runs off and gets the best of it. I need

## GARTER SNAKE

The stately ripple of the garter snake
In sinuous procession through the grass
Compelled my eye. It stopped and held its head
High above the lawn, and the delicate curve
Of its slender body formed a letter "S"—
For "serpent," I presume, as though
Diminutive majesty obliged embodiment.

The garter snake reminded me of those
Cartouches where the figure of a snake
Seems to suggest the presence of a god
Until more flickering than any god
The small snake gathered glidingly and slid,
But with such cadence to its rapt advance
That when it stopped once more to raise its head
It was stiller than the stillest mineral
And when it moved again it moved the way
A curl of water slips along a stone
Or like the ardent progress of a tear
Till, deeper still, it gave the rubbled grass
And the dull hollows where its ripple ran
Lithe scintillas of exuberance,
Moving the way a chance felicity
Silvers the whole attention of the mind.

—Eric Ormsby

• •

to be alone. If you ask me, she travels fastest who travels alone."

But it was possible she had mostly made it all up about the lawyer; she was weird-mooded, and as if hopeful. But she was brutal, too, at this time. "I don't want a stupid daughter and an ugly son hanging around my neck. . . . If I have to go out and shake my rear end and look for someone to marry, I don't want you two watching me."

I understood that she was tired of some things and not flexible and not very interested. She asked me to do the housework, and Nonie made scenes insisting that I do the housework, but I was working, too, and bringing in, when you count the money my real dad sent, more money than either of the women was: and I got the impression they were trying things out, they were seeing if they could swindle me: they had no real reason to do it, and nothing having to do with honor was involved—it was personal, as in seeing whose eyes turned away first when you stared at each other.

"Nonie puts the least in the kitty: she keeps almost everything she makes for herself. Make her do the work!" I insisted on this.

"Shut up! Shut up! Shut *up!*" Lila said. "I'll get a maid." And she did. We were broke but we had a maid.

IN the loose federation the three of us had so suddenly become, in such a ménage, the role of an adoptee is an odd one. So is being male: You are a pet—and an enemy—a stranger and an insider and an excuse for things. You are not perhaps a person quite—or perhaps that was a problem of mine and not a problem arising from the situation. Or perhaps one should not generalize at all. The women quarrelled often—but they were more like each other than either was like me—I was an outsider—a distraction—a possible ally—a duty for Lila, but not for Nonie—a duty Lila accepted. Lila said to her once, "You never even hand him an aspirin, how do you expect him to like you?"

But Nonie was obdurate—and stare-y.

I heard her say over the phone to some girl she was talking to, "He can get away easiest of any of us: he's got a good escape hatch." Then, in a weird tone: "He doesn't have to marry anyone." Lila, maybe everyone just about, was after her to marry anyone right then—to get her out of her circumstances.

But she didn't.

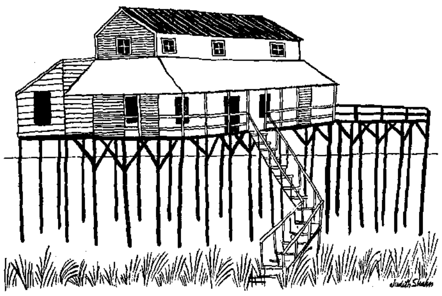
Lila said—moodily—"I'd like to be alone just once in my life."

Or, undoing her brassiere and unzipping the side of her dress, and turning her back to me as she steps out of her dress and puts a robe on over her slip, she says in the darkening air, "Where are the breasts of yesteryear?"

She attempts to get me to do things—she is like an older brother trying to see how dumb I am.

Sometimes I feel sorry for her.

She said to Nonie in a harshly jolly tone, "You and I ought to marry Swedish men—cold men are the most interesting." About business lunches making her fat: "Look at me, I look like a pig—and not a pretty pig, either."



It's hard to live among the things that people say.

Momma—depressed—said to Nonie, "Why don't you be pathetic and get someone to take you in. . . . I'll tell you the truth, I'll tell the world, I can't do it all." Then, screaming (Momma is unwell): "YOU'RE NOT SO BADLY OFF. . . . I'M THE ONE WHOSE LIFE IS NO GOOD ANYMORE."

WE went on being locally semi-upper-middle-class, though—"Other families do it, so can we."

The sounds of Lila's voice are a softish clicking of sparrow wings and sparrow-chirping, a linear flock of cries. Sparrows—dry-bodied, dry-toned, quick. She is brownish in tone nowadays. The feel of the fabric of the chair I sit in through the tired fabric of my clothes . . . the taste of the air in the room . . . the smell of dusk . . . the restlessness of the soul at sadness . . . Momma's need to rule—even if over a kingdom of sadness. Momma said, "It's all for one and one for all."

"No, thanks . . . I have my life to live." Nonie said that, actually.

Momma put me and Nonie up for grabs—who would take us in? It is possible she refused offers for me. She said to me, "You help me look respectable." I gave her an excuse, she said, to say no.

But no one locally wanted Nonie to live with them—not even Grandma: "I connt do nuttin mit a yung guhl. . . ."

LILA, lying on the couch, in deeper darkness among the shorter dusks as winter came, said, "They like her just fine but they can live without her. . . . She's not worth the price of admission. I'm an old cowhand, I'll tell you. I'm at the end of my rope."

Nonie said she would tell us what she looked for in the man she would marry: she wanted a young man who was blond, easygoing, a good businessman who knew how to have a good time, whose family had a big Colonial house—with pillars and a circular driveway with azaleas along it.

WARNING
GUARD DOG
ON DUTY

*"Excuse me, sir. May I see some identification?"*

• •

LILA said, "I want to live in an apartment hotel with good service for a change and I want a smart operator for a husband for a change—I've earned it. If you ask me, I'm ready to meet my ideal."

The women came home a little sweaty, work-stained, scared, in their *good clothes:* "What am I going to do? . . . Oh God . . . I can't stand up anymore." Collapsing in a chair, telling some incoherent tale . . . and you attempt to cheer them up. At times the house stank of fear and of disorder a peripheral dwelling at the edge of a lighted space. . . . Offstage, they were onstage still, in their sadness. Momma did commerce in Nonie's *chances* as if they were business futures. Some of this was parody, some was a mysterious cruelty in an *infinite* maternal *comedy.* Momma was tired of the world and she was pushing Nonie into it.

Some of it was affection—some of it was deeper than affection: a passionate and sightless attachment, one that included all the events around us but excluded me. It gave me gooseflesh—a sense of a dark universe that the women were in. Tempers and favors and rank, as they were set in the company of those two women, had a peculiar tang of sourness now for me.

I was used sometimes as a guinea pig for I.Q. tests at the nearby university. One man there, a professor, would put his hand on my shoulder while he prepared to say, *Get ready, get set, go,* watching his stopwatch. I tried to describe the steadying quality of his touch to Lila; and she said, covering her eyes with her arm—she was lying on the couch *as per usual* (her phrase)—"That's called squiring you—I like it, too . . . in small doses."

The professor did not think I was a likely child for my family or for Lila now. Lila said, "I need the money you bring in." But it was not a cold or insulting—or blood-chilling—remark the way she said it, dryly, sadly: realistically. She let me peek at the truth.

"All right," I said. "Just don't try to talk me into other things, and you have to let me do what I want about bedtime, and it's O.K."

"O.K.," she said.

"It's a deal," I said.

She said later, "I never saw a child as independent as you are."

But she rented me out to the professor by the weekend—for tests and whatnot. "Is it all right if I don't pack for you, *macher*?" Operator, that means.

But she liked me, sort of.

I went to the professor's house. It was brick, Georgian, with green shutters. He had a smallish, nervous wife. They were *polite.* They had two children: voices and eyes, favoritisms, veered here and there. Lila had said, *You'll find that it's like everyplace else in the world: it's real—nothing is ideal.*

Lila called up late Saturday night and screamed at them crazily over the telephone. She *was* crazy off and on nowadays. The professor, pale and distressed, said to me, "Your mother is a difficult woman. . . . Please don't be embarrassed. She wants you to come home tonight."

I telephoned her, and Lila started in on a tirade about child stealers. "You'd better come home where you belong."

"Why, Momma?"

"I'm not going to give you any compliments. . . . You want compliments? Well, I need to see your pretty eyes in this empty house. Your sister is driving me crazy: she wants to kill me."

Sometimes her words evoked scenes—these were just words.

WHAT is inside the head takes refuge in formulas—capsule things to carry into a present-tense moment. It's all nonsense, though, if you examine it. When I got home Momma was wearing lipstick: "I'm trying to look glamorous for you. . . . Are you *embarrassed*? Maybe *I'm* embarrassed—did you ever think of that?" (By my life among people who then talked about her.)

"I don't know what you expect me to understand, Momma."

"I expect nothing from you. . . . Just turn on the radio and sit where I can see your baby blues. I need some friendly eyes. . . . My nerves aren't good. . . . I don't want to be alone."

Of the professor and his wife Lila said, "They weren't exactly heroes, were they? Did it get to them, how smart you were, did they catch on you're impossible? I'll tell you a secret: people *want* to kill you. Stay still. . . . The thing is not to care. . . . I'm the I-don't-care girl. . . . You and me, we don't care anymore. Don't get a swelled head just because you and I are such swell people with such a sophisticated outlook. I can't live without you. I don't need you around for company. . . . It's not my peace of mind . . . it's your real mother's ghost: she gives me no peace. I need the money your father sends you."

At the edge of every statement is what it means further than itself—and what it doesn't mean. Around us is what she denies: my real mother's ghost gives her peace. It's not just money. And so on. I mean you *know* when it's just money—the voice is different then. She said, "You're not so bad—I didn't know I liked you. I'm like Garbo—I vunt tuh beee uhlohnnnnnn. . . . But you're O.K."

She had never cooked for me; but she cooked meals for me after that. She was a terrible cook, though. Neither she nor I liked her cooking. It was a symbol. (The local idiom was to say it was a symbol, *though*.)

MOMMA was seeing a guy who had liked her when she was a girl: "What it is is, it's Memory Lane." Then: "Ben is not an interesting man." A childless widower, he wanted a son. He'd be good to me. Nonie was seeing a rich homosexual guy who'd told her about his being homosexual. He was very rich, Momma said, but Nonie would never sacrifice herself for us—she wouldn't marry him to help us. Nonie said to me, "We'll give him you. . . . He can have you." She didn't mean it: she never let me meet him, even. She teased Momma, but she did let Momma meet him.

In the moments then . . . among the actual breaths . . . nothing that concerned the women was sufficiently in my range *then* that I can speak of it now with *full* knowledge.

"What I want I can't have anymore," Momma said on the phone to someone. "I'm spoiled. Ask me no questions, tell me no lies."

Even though she spoke to me in the ways she did, Momma hid the world from me as she knew it—her world, if I can call it that.

I stayed away from the house for days at a time—among boys and sometimes girls and their families, their mothers, women who were unlike my mother and sister. One cannot take the time to remember every moment of a period of a number of weeks: it would take longer than a number of weeks. I wanted to be difficult and bad, ordinary, and free . . . sly . . . and athletic.

ON a certain date, after eleven weeks, a Veterans hospital not far from Chicago called Lila. Someone there telephoned to say that S.L. was ill: he'd had a stroke in his car while he was driving to Chicago—and so on. Lila told me this: *No one knew who he was, he was in a coma for three months, but he came out of it and he asked for us.*

That story has certain problems of plausibility. Such a long coma *can* cause brain damage. Daddy had a wallet and a car registration and a driver's license with him. It is likelier (but not necessarily true) that in the car he began to feel very ill, and he checked into the hospital, and while he was there he had a stroke and went into a coma and came out of it knowing he was an invalid; and then he went on day after day, seriously afflicted with grief—or perhaps for a day or two. *He had a time of it*, Lila said. *He changed his mind.* . . . He most likely, after a while, now that he would be an invalid or a semi-invalid the rest of his life, chose to let the hospital call us. Or someone did without asking him. I believe all the stories. . . . I believe what anyone—everyone—says to me. I imagine him lying in bed and giving up the project of being ill by himself.

"*California has always been too big for its britches.*"

He said to me when he came home that he'd missed me: but I had been unhappy with him before he left: so what exactly had he missed? He had often complained, "You're too smart for me—you have no heart." He'd often said he didn't like me. He said to a couple

"*Geese today just don't seem to take pride in their appearance.*"

of men who came to see him when he was at home with us that he'd told the hospital he had no family and that the hospital on its own had called us and he would never forgive the hospital—it was a dry, male joke-not-a-joke. He told his brother on the telephone to California that he had been unable to speak all that time (or most of the time he'd been in the hospital) and that he had not wanted to see anyone. He told Nonie the hospital had found out about us among his papers and had refused to give him any more free treatment but had sent him back to Lila, whom he hated. It is hard to know why one decides certain things or why one decides to say certain things. It is hard to remember coherently or sensibly. It doesn't much matter now. The dragonfly flights of memorial glimpses of this and that in the past change things around anyway.

MORE family conferences to see if he ought to come back—if we ought to allow him to return. *We'll all just be nurses* . . . conferences in the house and on the phone. Lila said, "They all have their axes to grind, I don't know what the good-sense thing to do is or if there is one." She said to me, "You're a know-it-all—tell me what *you* think."

I shook my head. I refused to think.

She said, "It's not a good idea to say yes—it's the end of my life, but if I say no, I have to be someone who said no to him now when his back is against the wall."

SHE became odd-faced. Shadows haunted the sockets of her eyes. She was shadowy-mouthed. Meanwhile, Nonie said she would rather be left out of the discussion, too. She told me she was against S.L.'s coming back to us. "The bad stuff will start all over again." She wanted me to agree with her. In the days of *thinking-about-what-to-do*, Lila got more difficult, *catty* with people, outspoken (that is to say, rude), and obstinate and *hard to talk to.* "What starting over is there? What starting over is there at my age? S.L. will pull himself together and he'll go to work part time; we'll make a go of it; we'll make a comeback—I understand him. Listen, I made my bed and I'll lie in it. . . . I don't want to get to know another man. . . . If he's no good, I'll walk out. He likes me well enough: I'm not easy to get along with. . . . He would have come back if he hadn't gone into a coma. I don't want to start over. I started with him and I'll finish with him. That's the way I am." And: "No one can tell me what to do. I'm going to start over, but with him. . . . We're turning over a new leaf. . . . S.L.'s not going to die like a dog in the gutter. I'm tired of thinking. These are my last words on the subject."

Nonie said, "She just wants to torture him and the rest of us. She hasn't got any nerve left."

Nonie said, "Well, I can't live in a house with a sick man and make goo-goo eyes at boys I want to get to marry me. . . . No one thinks about me."

Momma said, "At my age, I know I'm making a mistake but"—she coughed—"*but* I *want* to make it . . . and who's going to stop me, I'd like to know. What I want to know is, who's against me and who will help me now. What about you, Wiley? People say someone your age shouldn't stay in a house with a sick man. . . . Will you stand by me?"

Her eyes: they were not unfamiliar to me. The defeat—the absence of merriment—the presence of dark amusement—a universe of half-calculated carelessness . . . you have only a second to prevent yourself from being moved. I kissed her eyelids. "Count me in," I said. I was pretty young. I said it in a storylike voice—as if it were all foregone. "I'll try to help." I pretty much meant it.

My face—a doggish, twisted, nervous boy's somewhat tough face. "You don't have the face of my dreams, *pisher*." She said that now with a faint smile. And closed her eyes. She put her still pretty arm over her deep-sunken, deep-shadowed eyes, and from behind her arm she said, "Well, it doesn't matter."

"TELL our fortune," she said. The cards said we were doing the wrong thing.

I laid the cards out and said, "We're doing the right thing."

She said, "I know. . . . I tell you what my secret is: I don't love anyone." She eyed the darkness in the corners of the room. "I don't know what anything means. . . . Well, maybe my luck will change. . . . I'm flying blind. I'm flying by the seat of my pants. Well, so be it."

AN ambulance brought Daddy home from Chicago. Gray-faced, skinny with illness, scared-looking in a kind of squirrel-like way, friendly and querulous, emotional. Lila *in the kitchen* said, as if to herself, "My God, he's a beaten man."

I slept on a couch in the dining room, Dad slept in my room.

Lila said to others, "Well, it is and it isn't a second honeymoon, but I will say this, the subject is reopened. My plate is full. I always say, Let the devil take the hindmost. . . . See no evil, do no evil, speak no evil—just get on with what you have to do."

She was negotiating decency, absolution, death—an ad-hoc morality in the face of illness and mortality.

She said to me late at night when the house was quiet, "I'm making up my life as I go along." She said, "I don't know what to do." Curtains were blowing at the open window. I didn't feel I liked or loved my parents much anymore or that I needed them—and if I did, it hardly mattered. I was scared, though, not just of having another family—my third, after all—but of the accumulated sadness: the meaninglessness. I thought we should fight death in each other and in ourselves and that we should fight other things—our own human nature, for example, and the way accident and bad things, so to speak, chewed everything up—and that it was more "important," more "vital," to do something kind than it was to be smart or reasonable or sensible.

I "decided" to be "indomitable," like Captain Horatio Hornblower in a book I was reading, and not to care about being poor and caught up in this mess but to be *a good child* to the best of my ability—a son, and all that—and to believe in simple things, and to be cheerful and loyal and O.K. I foresaw my own *freedom in that*—a weird intellectual freedom that had to do with will: I would do this thing, stay with the family, and *behave*, and then I could think about what I really wanted to do. But I wouldn't be haunted by my own darkness, at least. I'd be good to Dad. Uncomplicatedly good.

Lila saw it differently, understood me differently. "We have to be suckers because it would be worse to be the other thing." But she looked terrible: it really was killing her. "I can't help the way I look. Wiley, my life is over now."

*For the umpteenth time* I decided not to remember things but just to go along from day to day.

Daddy said, "You're going to stay and be a help? Can't bear to miss the show, is that it, pooperkins? Forgive and forget? Make no claims: be a gentleman even if it kills you?" He was trying to be noble; he was trying to be skeptical; he was trying to remind me of the past; he was being a lot of things and it came out like that.

He looked terrible; he was really ill, really ill and scared. Terrified and angry, bitterly scared in that style—and it showed.

"Take my advice: leave, don't stay here—I'm not good for anything, I'm good for nothing now." Dimly: "Ha-ha . . . ." He said, "I can't protect you from anything. . . . I can't protect you from *her*."

I know it sounds mad, but it *felt like* a pressure from God, an arrogantly experienced wind of death that kept me there and kept me from having seizures or non-stop nightmares: there are a lot of ways to escape a bad situation. One is by going right up to it and standing next to it, or in the center of it, until you either die or feel its *normalcy*, by which I mean its forbearance, the possibilities of living with it.

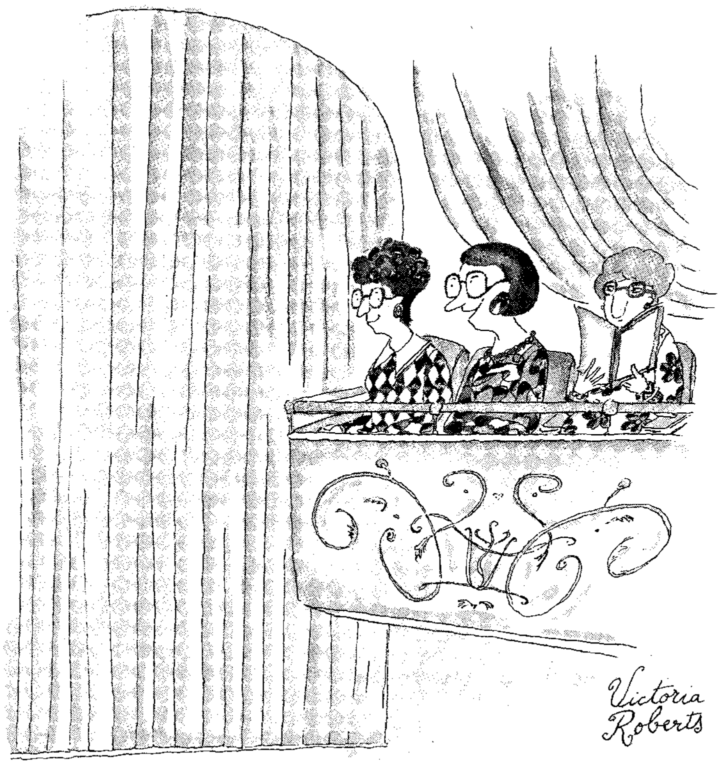
Daddy said again, "You're going to stay and be a help? *Can't bear to miss the show, pooperkins? Forgive and forget? A gentleman if it kills you?*" Decisions in real life, of course, are never quite final; you set yourself to be stubborn—you act it out, the finality. But it's touch and go whether you keep on. Daddy coughs and blacks out, and you hold him until his fear subsides and he begins to peer through his semiconsciousness at the air. I loved him some. Each occasion of seeing him brought, in its train, messages, omens; bits of affection; old dismissals-of-him as well. My sense of the world was refreshed in my losing touch with it.

Now, when I daydreamed, it was with new clusters of intensity in actual reference to what was lost. Meanings formed and were clear for a while—like clouds in the sky, their shadows on the ground.

And other children made a place for me—for a while I did not have to defend myself. I had this rank, this *laissez-passer*, this other role, so to speak: the kid with the really ill father.

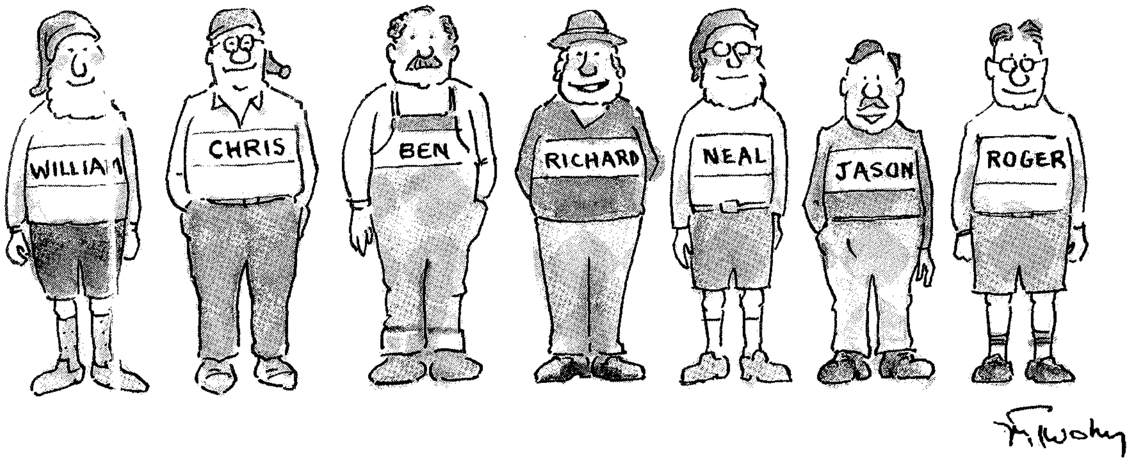
A day, a school day, to enter a school day—that *next* huge trembling block of time—was to enter an immediacy tailored to my being a sick man's son. One can forget and run in the playground at recess. But then when I stopped running I felt my heart in him; I held my hand to my chest and wondered if my heart was weak like Daddy's—I gasped as he did. . . . I felt close to him after a while and not human—not like other kids . . . at all.

THE other oddity was that I judged S.L.—when I was nine years old. See, he and Lila needed me there to arouse interest, pity, compassion in doctors. The child's presence, his loyalty, inspired loyalty. Sometimes,



"*I never thought I'd grow up to be the matinée crowd.*"

walking home in the wintry light, I wished I knew less, but to choose to continue walking toward home, the thing of refusing to choose anymore, was to be filled with breath. It was the opposite of suffocation. It was not like being adrift in airlessness. One did this stuff for *them* in order not to have worse memories about oneself. It was O.K.



THE SEVEN DWARFS AFTER THERAPY

• •

I HUNG around the house a lot the first months S.L. was home. I cut school. The school protested, but I kept on. At first S.L. was upset by my illicit presence: "I want no sacrifices from you, I want no sacrifices from a *child.*" I couldn't help *feeling* (seeing) that he didn't *like* me although he *cared-about-me.*

I was a tough, frog-faced, tense-nerved nine-year-old.

But also, in seconds, I could feel his breathing change when I entered his room. And when I drew near him I could see in his eyes a changing condition, a lessening of solitude. Part of it was because I was dumb to have stayed: we both knew this—and that it made room for him. This efflorescence of stupidity. The specific feelings of a specific boy. He straightened his hair with his hands. He'd get up, even, and brush his thinning hair—I was important company, ugly and young and stupid or not.

Some days he might ignore me. . . .

Some, even though he was lying down, he would put his arm around my waist and say, "Don't talk. . . . Just sit here and look at the light in the window with me." Once or twice he said, "I can't stand the things you say, you know that? Here, have a piece of licorice: someone brought me licorice: it's bad for you: have some." He said, "I like watching the light. . . . I have become a simple man, pooperkins."

It wasn't true but it was O.K. The yews, the light in the yews alongside the house, outside the bedroom window, the light on the grass, on our back-yard fence: we watched the late-afternoon light as if it were a show, Daddy and I.

Daddy said—over and over—"I can't do nothing for no one—not a thing—not for a single human soul. Stay if you want—but you're a fool. . . ."

I could feel his heart lift . . . his heartbeat straighten out . . . in his relief at being in the presence of a fool.

SO what? I have nothing else to do as interesting as this. I told him that once. He said it wasn't a kind thing to say. Then that it was. Then that he didn't want to think about it.

One is no longer shy. One is abrupt, little-boyish, crude, and stupid—not one's real self: perhaps this is one's real self now, the self you offer someone in companionship.

Daddy said, "Maybe that's the point of having nothing. You get to enjoy the company of a fool. . . . Then the next thing you know you even like being with yourself. Remember that. . . ."

It was more complicated than I can show here.

VARIOUS relatives gave *moral support* and a number of others sent money. Momma preferred the relatives who sent money. Grave remedies were considered, including a set of operations for Dad that would last several years. The project was dropped: it was too expensive, too uncertain; he was too old, the wrong body type, the wrong mental sort. He was not worth it . . . something like that.

I paid no attention.

MY parents loved me a lot—really a lot—not simply but really a lot, noisily, you might say, then for a while.

Nonie still said nothing kind to me—not ever—not once—not even then.

But she was different in manner . . . faintly respectful or in fear of me . . . a little.

"WELL," Lila said, sincere and yet ironic and laughing at me, "let's put a good face on things . . . let's all pull together—let's make a home and see what happens." She said to me, "Are you listening? You ready to put on your best bib and tucker? You have your good manners ready? Will you be a bright spot in a dark, dark world for the rest of us?"

Nonie said to her, "Leave my feelings alone. . . . I want to be young, I want to have these years for myself. I have to get married and try to save what I can."

Momma said, "She never lifts a finger to help anyone . . . and she never will. She wants to save herself is all it is with her. What it is is silly. . . . Well, that's not always the worst thing in the world to be."

But sometimes it is. . . .

Momma said to me, "Oh, you, you're a boy—you can make sacrifices, you can let things go for a little while and you can pick up right where you left off—you'll still have a life."

Momma was bluffing. And Nonie was amiable—and patient—but *merciless.* I assumed a similar mercilessness could be applied to her. One might bluff with Momma. One might have, with either of them, an equivalent concern for oneself.

Some of Lila's remarks at this time:

*I'm no one's sweetie pie anymore—*

*Nobody wants you when you're old and gray—if you're the realistic type.*

*Life is a battle, we have our own little war, we're a hospital unit.*

*Thank God, God put the spirit of toughness in us, we don't lie down and play dead. . . . We put up a good front.*

A percentage of what she did was *always* sincere.

Sometime in 1940, Daddy got worse again. He had been difficult all along, mostly difficult—frightened and surrenderish, overexcited, and sometimes determined to act as if he were well. Daddy, acting as if his illness had been imaginary all along, or had been a dream, became more or less *wild,* vengeful toward Lila—and death. He blamed her. In order to argue with her, he was *vengeful* toward health, even toward daylight at times. He and Nonie joined forces.

And Momma, showing off, was a heroine-commander—she was very commander-in-chiefish. I don't mean noble: she gave in to anger and to despair. The daily reality in the house was like being on a firing line. She said, "We're in the trenches. . . . It's a terrible thing. . . . We're under bombardment from indecency—I can't go on. . . . I want you to go on, Wiley."

Daddy fell ill again and died and was resuscitated, sort of. Nonie went to live with relatives in North Carolina. Once she was out of the house and we spoke maybe every six weeks on the phone, I tried to ask her for advice if Momma and Daddy fought—or if I was sad. I won't say I missed her. Yes, I will say it. Perhaps, too, I imagined missing her as a proper thing to do.

On the telephone, long-distance, if I spoke about the family, Nonie would cry out, "Don't talk to me about that: I can't stand to hear about those things. . . . I can't stand the way you talk about things anyway: I want things to be nice. Other girls don't have sick fathers. If I smile and have a good time, people wonder if I have regular feelings about my *father.* I don't want boys to wonder about me."

## ZORAH

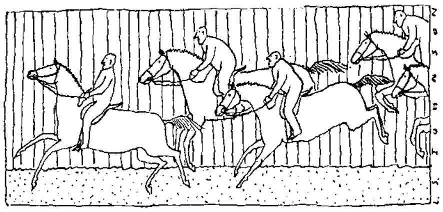
She is seated somewhere—I can't recall where
Exactly now, the young Algerian shop clerk
From a clothes store Mother frequented those days—
And she is seated alone, in a café, let's say,
Looking out onto a crowded square in Châteauroux,
On a market day in the early fall, a shifting
Fretwork of pushcarts, string bags, makeshift stalls,
The gutters a rubble of spoiled fruit, rinds,
Bread crusts, dung, stray dogs snuffling at
The entrails too bruised to lay out in the pans,
An acrid smell off the pissoirs, and the dizzying
Zigzag horseflies make in the airless crush
Of those afternoons. But all the rank activity
Out of which I've just caught sight of her
Seems not to break upon the stillness that surrounds
Her where she's lifting her spoon to sip some
Chocolate from a steaming bowl; and though it rained
Earlier, off and on, the sun's come out, the sun's
Reflected off the window she sits staring from,
So that her image deepens behind the pane,
Advances as if out of flame and then recedes again
Into a glassy incandescence our desolate world
Would crisscross for a moment before the next
Cloud came and shadowed her back, as in the fadeout
Of a movie screen. This is a picture I've kept
For thirty years, it's always there, in a silence
Of which I've never spoken, a suspension bridge
Across that time which in some ways does not exist,
Will never exist, the story of my life
In love, the buried life I know little about,
Perhaps know nothing at all. But picking my way
Through the marketplace that afternoon,
On my mother's arm, I've been in love for days,
For weeks, though, foolish as this may sound,
I didn't know I was until, figured as she is
In the fired, unspeakable glare of that windowpane,
She seems so beautiful she frightens me.

—SHEROD SANTOS

• •

Lila said, "There's too much life-and-death around here for her. . . . For me, too."

Nonie would ask how we were eating. Momma had said that getting food on the table would kill her—we had a maid who cooked three times a week; and three nights we had cold cuts, or Chinese food that one of us went to the restaurant and ordered and brought home in little white cartons with metal handles. One night a week, Momma cooked and I washed up. But it wasn't *the cooking* she meant. Momma said she couldn't go on selling insurance and "nursing" Daddy and "keeping my looks at my age when I don't have an easy life. I don't have a friendly life, let me tell you, it isn't *decent* to ask so much of one person—I'm not a saint."



Daddy, who felt terror (and shame) at being ill, said to me, "Did they stick you with the latrine detail? Well, you always were a fool, weren't you?" Momma refused to nurse him; he refused (or had refused) to talk to her. I never knew the details of that story (although I can imagine them). I took over the stuff of taking care of him mostly; and he helped; mostly he took care of himself once he recovered from the second serious episode.

But it got weirder. Momma told me that the way men treated her, that the thing of being a woman without a man around to protect her—she didn't explain in what way—sickened her, as it had Nonie. "That's the real reason I sent her away, where people will look after her rights."

Anyway, Momma quit her job—or was partly fired. She stayed home and had, she said, *a nervous breakdown*—a long and complex tantrum or spell of longing for life to be other than it was.

*"I hope you don't mind. We're workaholics."*

• •

Momma said she couldn't stand being a charity case, but she became one full time. She said she was breaking in two. She said to Dad, "This is your doing, S.L., this is the life you gave me." She said to me, though, that she did this, was unkind to S.L., at the doctor's urging; she said she was supposed to "shame" S.L. into trying harder to live, to live a more active life. "The doctors want you to put up a fight, S.L.; it's not good medicine for you to be a *coward*." Daddy called her Madame Goebbels–Poison Mouth and said she was killing him; and she said he was killing her—and me. He never again forgave her, or, if he did, it was in such dark ironic ways I didn't like to see it; and I don't want to think about it now, my dad's ironic mercy. Momma said, "I don't understand original sin. . . . If everyone has it, it can't be very original."

She would *gouge* charity out of everyone she could—clothes, invitations (to get out of the house and away from Dad)—to prove she wasn't helpless or ground down into mere piety by illness, comparative poverty, growing older, despair. Sometimes it seemed to me that a dozen unlikely truths were visible every day at home. Lila said she could not survive if she wasn't herself, did I want her to die, and Daddy said he could not live if he wasn't himself, did I want him to die, and each said to the other, *Look what you're doing to the boy—do you want* HIM *to go crazy?* It seemed to me that self-preservation was lousy, a lousy thing to do. I don't know. It was hard to think up some meaning that would accept all three of us.

But without such a meaning the days were impossible. Kindness was impossible. Sanity was impossible. The accusations—*Are you trying to kill me?* And: *You are dragging us all down.* And: *You* ARE *ugly; you've brought us to A Pretty Pass; this is the end, I guess*—made the house a rough place. Dreams and omens, views and moods, feelings—there is a buildup, an accumulation, of events and of opinions in odd ways, but no central truth makes itself known by miracle, not even an *I will save myself.* Maybe that was because Nonie exemplified the latter. Teachers came to the house to plead with my parents to release me; but, in some moods, Lila believed I had put the teachers up to that, egged them on, tricked them, and Daddy would half go along with her in some kind of quick alliance about that. . . . Anyway, she *believed* in having me around. You can look from face to face in our living room and see nothing but people being people: you can see the failure of every idea. You can listen to the breathing and see how human people are. It got so it made me laugh—in a way—the fifteen bad minutes on a humid rainy day of hysterical and overtly shrill and even screaming and genuine horror in one or both of them, my parents.

And then, if you're stubborn, *things calm down* and we go back into truce—into being good and noble or ordinarily patient, long-suffering, tolerant for a while. I was there: the suffering was blurred . . . changeable. I was a kid. Lila said, "No one's to blame: we tried, we're trying. Listen, I'm not slow to cast a stone; but I don't see that that's called for here. I wish S.L. would try harder. . . . He's the world's worst patient. That's where Nonie gets her selfishness: the two of them are the most selfish people you can ever know—well, monkey see, monkey do." (She explained *Hitler* that way, too: "He's a success—that impresses people—you know what happens—monkey see, monkey do. . . . *Well, what do you expect?*" She could do a lot of variations with catchall phrases.)

She said, "I don't think being sick gives S.L. the right to lord it over me. I know he's under a strain, but we're all under a strain and enough's enough. I blame no one, but I'll tell you this: I don't know HOW MUCH LONGER I CAN GO ON—AND THAT'S THE TRUTH." She said, "Even in suffering, people are just people." She was ill herself by then, gallbladder and the first hints that she might have cancer.

S.L., unhappy, tense, and bitter, said

Well? Did she say yes?
Quiet! I'm waiting for the translation!
THE INTERNATIONAL DATE LINE

to me, "Is that woman handing you a lot more shit than usual? Why do you listen to her? Don't you know anything? Do you know about learning to come in out of the rain?" He said flatly, "You should save yourself from her. DON'T BE A SISSY. . . ."

He couldn't sleep if I wasn't in the house. Sometimes he said, "Save yourself from me," *and sometimes he said,* "Don't save yourself from *ME*. . . ." Gosh, it was creepy.

"Try not to think about it," Momma said. "Hang on to your health."

Sometimes Momma would be downright cruel to S.L. "He *lorded* it over me long enough. . . . He's good for nothing now." She said that to him—in the third person like that, wearily, dramatically.

If she saw me listening, she said to me, "Curiosity killed the cat; you know that, don't you?" In my dreams, curiosity, an adolescent boy, killed and dismembered a dog.

My parents had an edge of mercilessness, not always unconsciously or drivenly, sometimes semiconsciously, sometimes fully consciously—with wild breaths and chemistries akimbo.

I didn't have to be honest about it with myself. I saw that they cared about each other in some way, that, off and on, they preferred this stuff to a merely medical fate.

THE bad time worsened. They resented it that I was alive. . . . By then, in a sense, they were permitting *so many things in themselves*—indulgences in wartime or because life was hard—that they slid easily into disliking me at times just because I was there. It was habitual for them to go too far.

But if I yelled, *or protested quietly,* their states worsened, accelerated by guilt almost. Anyway, I brought money into the house, but nothing was spent on me—not for doctors or clothes or anything. No schoolbooks, no notebooks. Sometimes not even milk for me. Momma said, with a wrinkled face and a look of honesty, "I can't bear it. I can't take care of anyone. We all have to be in the same boat OR I WILL GO MAD." Scary egalitarianism. But human.

Nothing in my life announced that I could endure much of this or that I might live through it and on after it for a while in some kind of regular way.

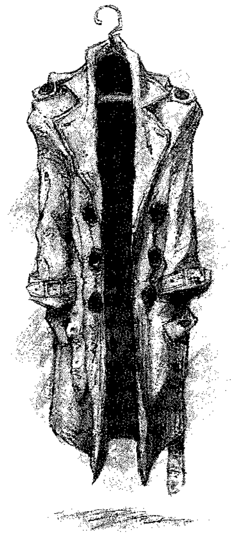
It is very strange to have no books, no lessons, no notepaper or pencils or stamps, nothing but ragged clothes and haircuts you get for nothing as charity, crewcuts, and you're still sort of semi-upper-middle-class. We had a spectrum of poverties, a continuum of deprivations in the house. The moments of self-control became fewer and fewer. My father had little time or strength for nobility. My mother had no hope and no wish to exemplify lies. I had no innocence about any of this after a while. I tried to get the two of them to be simpler and less violent for my sake, so I could be innocent—I may have sounded like Nonie.

Momma, quite mad by then, loony, said, "You want us to make sacrifices for you: go live somewhere else." She never said that to Nonie. I could escape in that way. I tried to leave at that point; I moved in with some people who lived a block away and I stopped off at home every day. Lila, though, came after me and stood in the rain on the sidewalk in front of the house where I was staying and screamed at the house, at the doors and the windows of the house where the people I had taken shelter with lived: "Wiley, your dying father loves you and needs you, you bastard!" People said she was crazy—that it was the strain and that she was *that age. . . . And that I should go* away to school. Dad said she had always been crazy, that now everyone could see what she was like. The circumstances of our lives—as I said—made me laugh.

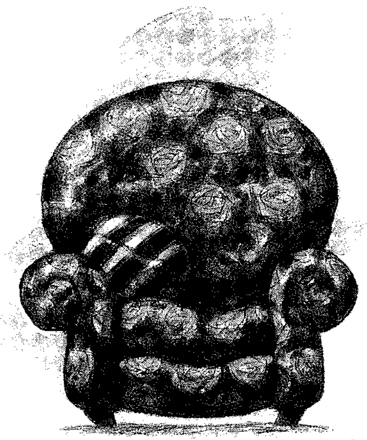
*I asked Nonie for help*—this was on the telephone to Carolina. Nonie said, "I'm young, don't ask me to interfere. . . . You're their pet now: you won out—do what you like."

Lila said to me, "I know what you're doing: you're laying up grievances so you can leave us in the lurch—you're just like Nonie, that's what you're like: when you're good and ready, you'll take off and have your life. And we'll die here like dogs."

The thought had occurred to me that if things got bad enough and I left, I would go on remembering, but if I stayed I might not remember actively once *the worst was over*—one of Mom's phrases. S.L. said, "Life is shit." The



*In these pockets you could find several mislaid dollars, some tissues and a rather linty throat lozenge.*



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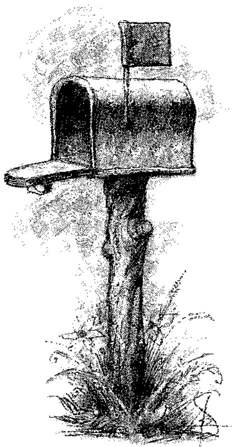

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shattered condition of his heart drained his face of color, and not only that, of the power to be absent in thought or attention from a present moment in relation to his condition, his illness. . . . He wasn't there with you—with me. Mostly he would talk only to me, see only me (Lila said) at this time—but when I was with him I was in the presence of my father-by-adoption, who wanted me there, but it was all contradictory, contradictory madly: he was entirely (and intently and fearfully) present—to his own danger, his own state—really like a man on a tightrope or like a man being tortured, and yet, even if he was in a sense performing his death-and-life trick in front of me, at the same time his face, even with its hiddenness gone in performing, his face seemed partly erased, gone from me, anyway. . . .

Momma got weirder and weirder: she would confront me when I came into the house and she would be half dressed, her breasts out like wild milk-and-eyes, and she would say, "Tell me how you live through this. . . . Tell me how you stay alive."

If I burst out laughing, she might, she often did, sober up—if I can say that.

It was almost like seeing a moment—I know a moment is not a thing—but an eyelid room, a room with eyelid-walls that blinked, and a semi-airy stage and a tree-thing-almost-a-letter-of-the-alphabet with me perched in it and Mom on the ground and a rush of wind *seen* as thin, curling lines—a restless brevity that, having alighted, had not alighted at all: so grace and patience came and went in my parents in certain moments and took the place of self-concern and mood and then were replaced by this other stuff, but always unstably. You never knew what flicker or flight of obstinacy or cruelty would shift the balance, the mood, the shiny or dull-colored distortions. Daddy said it was all *disgusting*—"but you make a game out of it, *pisher*." He said I was a kid and was O.K.—sometimes. It was, actually, male forgiveness—*alighted* and *not alighted*—a shifting as of light or as of breath or as of ribs, a distraction, a generosity; a form of love in a given moment . . . a specific moment. Love? Things were often O.K. in their way. I remember Momma coming into the living room, where Dad and I were listening to the radio, and saying: "Well, is this the best you have to offer a good-looking woman on a rainy night? I suppose it will have to do. Make room on the couch for me, will you?"

I guess it's odd to be sentimental about a time of horror and my father's love and my mother's half-baked charm, but in a world of original sin (maybe) was hidden this almost erotic and weird *justice*—and it wasn't entirely pitched beyond one's hearing, not anymore, although one was a child still in many ways.

Daddy said to me, "Sometimes I'm sweet." He said, "Sometimes everyone is sweet."

BECAUSE of how things changed, walking into our house, then into the apartment we moved to, was like starting in medias res every day. The past kept being rewritten. It came to this new total—or so the two of them, Momma and S.L., would insist.

Lila maybe was contemplating sleeping with a local corporation head grown rich in wartime, and moving out of the house. Or she was fighting with some woman who was trying to place her in a lower social category than she felt she had been in before S.L. became ill. Or she had won or changed her mind and was having *a little case of shell shock*, *battle fatigue*, *tonight*. You never knew. She and S.L. might be getting along. Reality *is* duration—in medias res becomes an evening. Three hundred and sixty-five evenings become a year. Things that last longer are not realer even to the mind, but they become what is largely and as-if-*intuitively* known. I was ten and eleven. Then I was twelve and big—I was long-legged and skinny in a wartime crewcut the barber humiliatingly still did not charge me for unless I insisted. The stuff at home had gone on for three years. My feet are big and they bump on things. I keep forgetting I have big feet and that I have grown. It is spring. . . . The windows are open. On my way home I saw limp spears of forsythia in the almost longitudinal rays of late-afternoon Midwestern spring sunlight. The aging drapes—heavy, pale, blue-gray silk damask things—are blowing, as are, in a more active wind-tossed fashion, the white muslin undercurtains. Daddy is visible in the front room. Has he been sneaking coffee in the kitchen? And Momma is on the phone . . . with her sister? Her mother? A friend? The corporation-president lover, or almost lover, or

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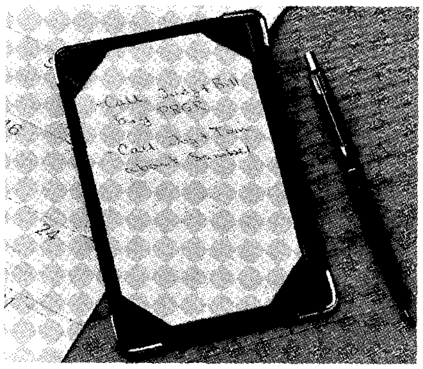

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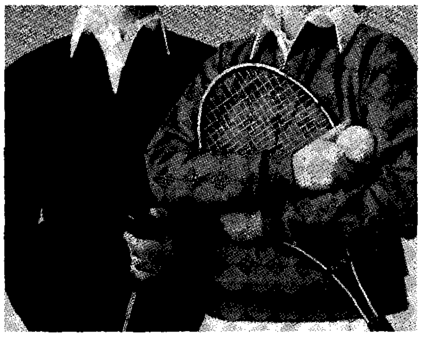

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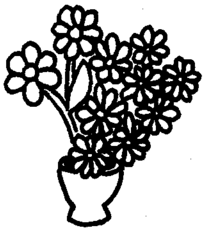
whatever he was? No one will ever explain to me what went on. I know what I know at various ages and almost, it seems, by accident—in the almost unbearable paradoxicality of accident turned into a geometry of accidents, into likelihood and logic-in-real-life.

I mean, the *logic* starts at a certain point and then extends through certain phenomena in a disciplined way. Momma's eyes: now that I was tall, I looked down into them and saw that they were like darkened theatres, with things going on in the dark in them; and then the lights would go on in a way, a performance would begin; but not a lot would be explained even then. But I knew this much—in part, only because I was tall. . . . And spoiled, she said.



Nowadays Daddy might mutter about her "That bitch," and I could half tell, depending on whether I was in a steady mood or was upset or not, whether he was angry or was signalling a broken heart.

If I didn't know whom he was talking about, he might get angry with me because his medical state burned him and altered his temper or because he was O.K. and just masculinely sneery at me for my general obtusity, my obtuseness, my being dumb in a lot of ways.

And I would burn with rejection—or I would laugh. You don't usually disturb a broken heart—or try to cure it—especially if it is also the actual failing heart of a man ill with genuine heart trouble, but by this time Daddy would let me address his broken heart. And this was odd and private, since it was like, in a sick way, I guess, a guy entrusting his son with his car—it was sort of like that. But it was his feelings. But it would be in his eyes: a special area of permission—of car keys and ignition—kind of—and of that sort of distrust and resignation—and a veiling over, politic and clever, of *indulging-the-kid.*

He might enunciate an aphorism: "Gentlemen don't snitch, gentlemen don't tell tales out of school." He meant about his having come to like me.

He might say, "Flirt with me, like a nice fella."

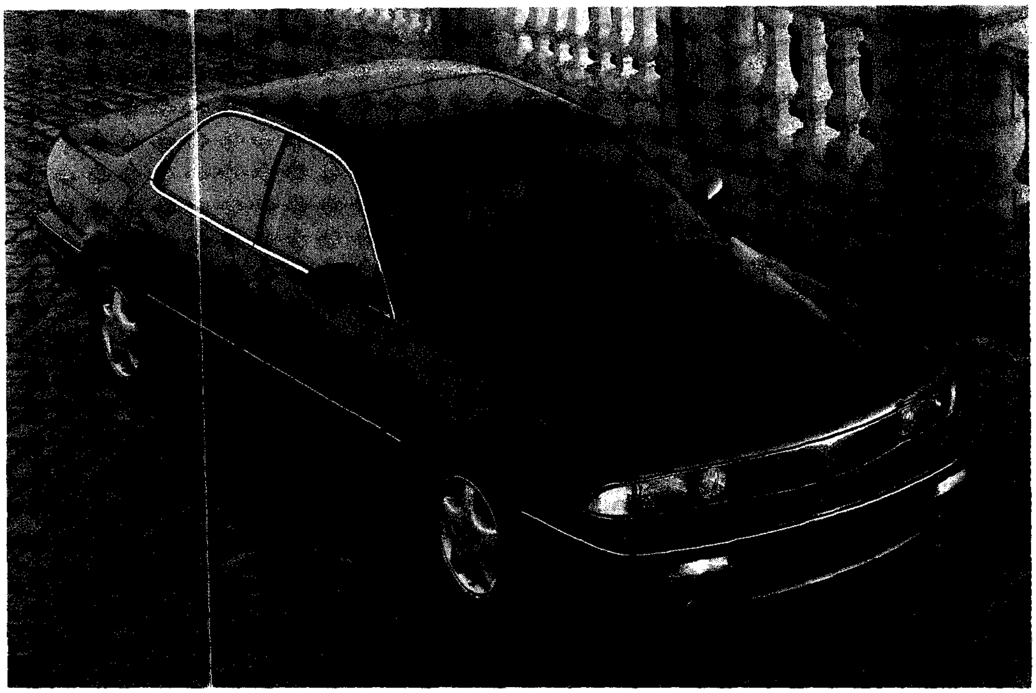
Or "Give us a hug. . . ."

I often felt in him the murderously ribald thundering of his conviction, in a male-ish big-shot way, that this was love . . . worthwhile love.

But love as meaning. Not piously. But like among the troops, you know? Catch-as-catch-can? Male-flibbertigibbet or shed-time and off-duty stuff? He seemed to assume that the truth about his feelings and about his life when I was not there would give him no credit with me, and yet he would discuss some of those things if I remembered to have the air—and some of the reality—of being the other half of a duo, a pair of guys sitting in a bar in an agreed-on-and-loyal-and-yet-shy way with principles-of-despising-women-as-dishonest—us as dirty but loyal pals, mutually. This was if I hadn't forgotten him during the day and had not, oh, gotten involved at school or something, or in sports, or in daydreaming. This stuff had evolved with him and me over the years.

When Momma's nagging (or *ragging,* her term) got him *off his duff and on his feet* with a forbidden, unlit cigar in his mouth and looking like a pale parody of his well self, he would talk to me in certain ways then. Sometimes he would complain, sort of as if giving a footnote: "The fibrillations are bad. I'm taking it slow. . . . That bitch is asking me to go make money again. . . . I'm not in the mood for any bullshit. . . . I've had a bad day, *sonny boy . . . pisherkins.*" The thing for me with him, when I was twelve and had gotten big, was to recognize with masculine discretion the presence of a not-final, not-overwhelming-all-else love.

Of course, a lot of this made you attractive to other people. To be shaped like this, to be the tall, gawky kid who was living through this made you a kid attractive to some people. A lot of the irony was that I was inarticulate some anyway, in ways that hurt, that burned and stung and tore me apart: embarrassment took the place of guilt and of irony. I thought the universe was dirty. It was O.K. but it was dirty. It was not to be understood—not truthfully understood—but a lot of theories were floating around, a lot of pieties: and a lot of rhetoric. You could read the rhetoric of battles daily. Or I could think about my dad and break the cheeks of heaven and make them weep and so on: none of it was untrue entirely; but none of it was even almost entirely true, either. We had a considerable amount of decency in the house off and on and for days on end—for



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months sometimes. It just wasn't there forever—you know? It wasn't ever forever.

*People will be people*, and some of that was tarted up, made use of; some of it was faked, lied about, cleaned up, made visible, oddly edited . . . promoted, shown provocatively. Speaking now in the realm of opinion, I can't say I ever in my life saw anything lovelier, really, than S.L. sometimes in the horror when he was ill and decided to dilute the horror—for me. He could be warm, smart, kind, gentle, ironic, knowing, not phony, either—he was better than any father in any movie at those times. "What's a little death between friends?" he would say, getting his breath after a kind of phony asthma attack, his breathing having failed during a bad dream. I would be holding him in my arms. His manner had a swing and neatness. And huge sophistication—*huge to me, much more than I would* have believed possible. A touch of genius; humane, though. It wasn't *impersonation*—or just impersonation. It was a display of knowledge and of ability and of a not entirely ironic courage and, I guess, forgiveness, toward life—*Look what you get in the way of surprising things: an example of personal nobility like me in my illness.* But he didn't persevere in that stuff very long. Not usually. Mostly he didn't keep it up—he didn't want to. He couldn't.

It doesn't matter.

I kept Dad company—that was mostly what I did instead of growing up. People said I did a good job; I kept him from being lonely. I didn't know if I was dead or ill, though—by osmosis, contagion, a fever of reflection of him.

Lila said, "You've done well. . . .You came up smelling like a rose again." I was admired as A Good Son. Admired quite a lot. I didn't act crazily. But, see, time doesn't stop. You can't really have a trauma and freeze things at a moment of praise. Or maybe you can, but I don't think so, judging from my experiences.

At the moment she was speaking, Lila felt that people admired me more for being a son than they did her for being the wife she was, the wife who had stuck by S.L. for years and whose life now seemed over. She said this to me. She said, "Why are you laughing? You got silly when you got tall—you know that?"

"'The something laugh that bespeaks the empty mind . . . the vacant mind.' I have a teacher who says that," I said. You have to *remember* that time goes on, moment by moment.

"Yes? Well, that's how you laugh . . . like a vacant lot—ha-ha . . . a lot of weeds. . . . Stop laughing before you make us both sick. Ha-ha."

I used to go into these spells of nutty laughter—almost on purpose: it was like being drunk on purpose: I laughed soberly-drunkenly on and on. We laughed drunkenly differently, Lila and I: Daddy wasn't supposed to laugh because it endangered his heart. He could smile and do a male kind of *tee-hee*, though. Lila is laughing in the complicated way of a movie star who remains photogenic with an open laugh—a woman who has learned to laugh photogenically but persuasively.

Laughing, she said, "I know you: I know what you're up to."

"Yeah? What? What am I up to, Momma? What am I doing?" You have an appetite for information about yourself.

"Never mind. . . . Never you mind. . . . You think you can get away with it, but I'm on to you."

"Momma, tell me, what am I getting away with?"

Our situation, simply in itself, kept drawing my attention to the actuality of truth and lies, love and not-love, in the moments of them doing their routines, the swooping and silent thing of the approach and the arrival of the moment, of a mood enclosing us; departure and setting us free, or expelling us, already beginning to occur. The lightest, moistest kiss. *Tell me, will we live another week? What do you see for us in the Christmas season?* "What's gonna happen next, Momma?"

"I don't know. We'll do something. Stick around and you'll find out."

"O.K., I will." I couldn't help being curious.

Then the ugliness—the devil's stuff recurs, too—when Daddy says, "You got a smug look, you know that: your face sickens me," and he lies down and turns his face to the wall. "I am bored and scared, and you are scum—I am tired of scum." ("And he's a man who never kept his word in his whole life," Lila, who was listening in the hall, said later.) "I am tired of fakes and of fake shit and of you. . . . The world is shit and I want to die."

Lila said he couldn't bear it, not being the main attraction in the house, the attraction in the center ring, and that he used his (ill) health to be the center of everything; and that if he wasn't the center he wanted to quit. "He was always a quitter," she said.

IT was dying he used mostly, not ill health, not just ill health; and it wasn't fake: he *was* dying.

He did the other, too, but he also made his dying into—well, I have to live with this—he made his dying into sincere criticism of the world, of Lila, of Nonie, and of me. . . . Maybe not sincere. How do you know? Sincere not as doctrine but in regard to him living. S.L. said that we were ugly people, him, too, we had made him ugly, we were ugly in our souls; he said that life was ugly—then, sometimes, if I said, "What about me? Do I have a chance?" he'd change what he said; but sometimes he didn't; and he said, "You have no chance no chances."

His second stroke, when I was ten—that one was in the middle of the night. I guess he and Lila had been doing stuff. Maybe just quarrelling, but maybe other stuff—you can only think this later, when you're older. Lila said to me when we were waiting at the hospital in the middle of the night, waiting for the moment of S.L.'s death, "I'll tell you something sad: truth can kill you." And: "It isn't always good for people. . . . S.L. has had to face things people shouldn't have to face." She said, "A lot of people have dropped us. . . . They blame me. Well, what can I say? I did it all with my little hatchet—well, Wiley, you'll see; no one lets you get away with anything. They get even for everything—even for favors."

Favors . . . and condescension. Dependence and gratitude. My twelfth birthday came two months after Dad's third stroke. Dad lived on then, too. He lived on for a little while more. I was surprised I'd made it to twelve. This family stuff went on. When I was ten, Lila, in tones of the collapse of hope: "You never know what you can live without until you try. . . . You never know what you can live with, either . . . until you have to."

Well, this is what it was like at home.

—HAROLD BRODKE

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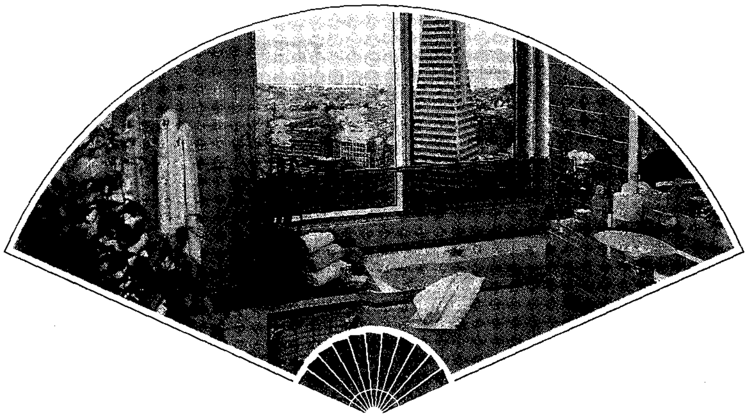

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***AIG Issues Forum***

# America needs a ne fast and effective clea

### AN ALARMING LACK OF PROGRESS IN CLEANUP.

When Congress enacted the Federal Superfund program in 1980, the goal was to quickly clean up America's most dangerous hazardous waste sites. Congress and many others assumed there would be only a relatively few such sites and that cleanup costs would be limited.

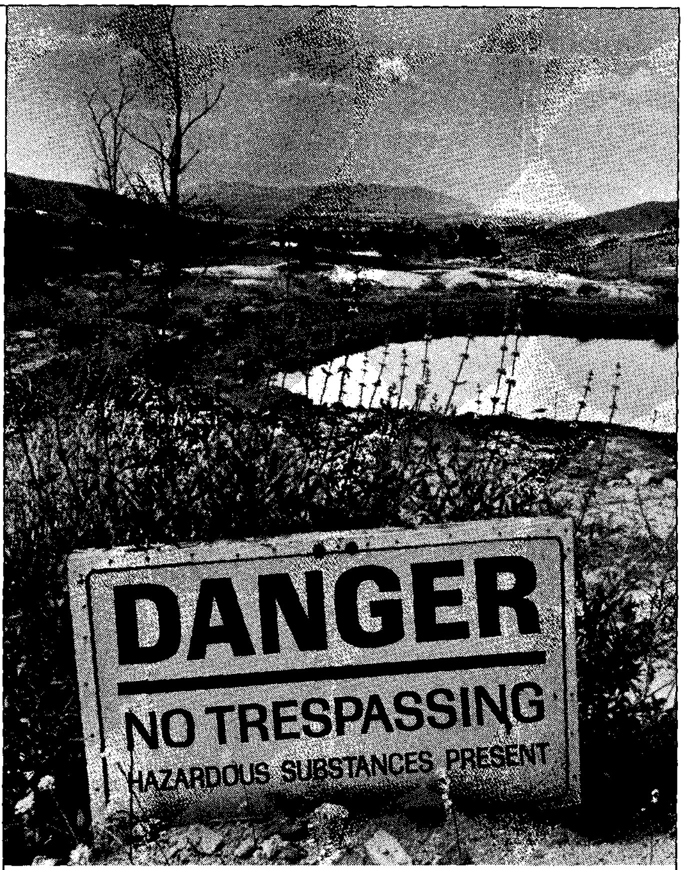
Now, after a decade of trying to make Superfund work, it's clear these assumptions were wrong and that a quick fix was never possible. What's wrong with Superfund and why has so little been accomplished?

The problem is twofold. First, the real scope of our nation's hazardous waste situation is far greater than Congress anticipated. With 1,200 priority sites already identified, growing numbers of sites are being found in every state. The Environmental Protection Agency expects that by the year 2000, there may be as many as 2,000 priority sites.

With rapidly rising cleanup costs, which now average about $25 million per site, the eventual price tag is staggering. According to a top government agency, cleaning up all of America's hazardous waste sites could take from 30 to 60 years and cost up to $500 billion!

A second problem is Superfund's alarming lack of progress in cleanup. A decade and billions of dollars later, fewer than 60 out of the 1,200 sites have actually been cleaned up.

Why? One major reason is Superfund's liability system. It requires that cleanup be paid for by establishing liability-who sent what waste, how much and where-and then negotiating or litigating with those believed to be responsible. While this sounds good in theory, it hasn't worked in practice. Instead, the result has been delayed cleanup and enormous legal, consulting and other costs unrelated to cleanup.



### COMPOUNDING THE PROBLEMS INSTEAD OF SOLVING THEM.

This is because working out who pays and how much for cleanup is very difficult. Under Superfund, anyone who simply used or owned the site at any time could be liable for the entire cleanup bill. Users can include major corporations, small businesses, local governments, hospitals, nursing homes, schools, even individuals. And it does not matter who caused the harm or whether they did anything wrong. Superfund's retroactive

# w system to achieve p of our environment.

liability provision makes parties pay for past actions based on today's standards.

For example, at 422 sites almost 14,000 parties have been notified that they could be liable. In turn, many of them are identifying still others who contributed in some way to the presence of waste at each site. And since Superfund liability deals with past waste disposal, the record of users can go back 25, 30 or even 40 years and can number in the hundreds.

The result? The focus on cleanup has been lost as private and public parties spend years in difficult but unavoidable negotiations and litigation, trying to work out agreements that would provide funds for cleanup. At some sites, more money has been spent resolving complex factual issues than on cleanup itself. This does a lot for lawyers and consultants, but very little for the environment. And of course, these costs are eventually passed on to all of us as consumers in higher prices for goods and services. Isn't it time to stop this wasteful process and get on with cleaning up our environment?

At AIG, we think so. There is little to be gained by arguing over waste disposal that happened long ago. America needs a system that will promote fast and effective cleanup, reduce unnecessary legal fees, spread the cost of cleanup broadly, and encourage responsible waste management practices today.

## A PROPOSED SOLUTION: THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND.

To accomplish this, we have proposed creating a National Environmental Trust Fund, similar to the National Highway Trust Fund. Its resources would be used exclusively for cleaning up old hazardous waste sites. Superfund's tough liability provisions would still apply for future pollution, as would all other state and federal environmental laws designed to promote responsible waste management.

One way this fund could be financed would be by adding a separate fee to commercial and industrial insurance premiums in the United States. Even a modest assessment, say 2% of premiums and an equivalent amount for self-insureds, would provide about $40 billion over the next decade - more than enough to clean up the 1,200 highest-priority sites. Without endless time and money spent on legal debates about liability.

A national advisory board consisting of private individuals, industry and public officials could be charged with overseeing the program. We also suggest giving consideration to establishing local technical monitoring committees in each community. These groups of local citizens, representatives of industry and others would work with the Environmental Protection Agency and their own state on the particular cleanup site - from the very beginning of the cleanup effort.

## YOU CAN HELP.

We've waited long enough and spent enough money in the courtrooms. Now it's time for action. A cleaner America should be all Americans' shared goal and shared responsibility.

To express your views, or if you would like further information about AIG's proposed National Environmental Trust Fund, write to Mr. M.R. Greenberg, Chairman, American International Group, Inc., 70 Pine Street, New York, NY 10270.

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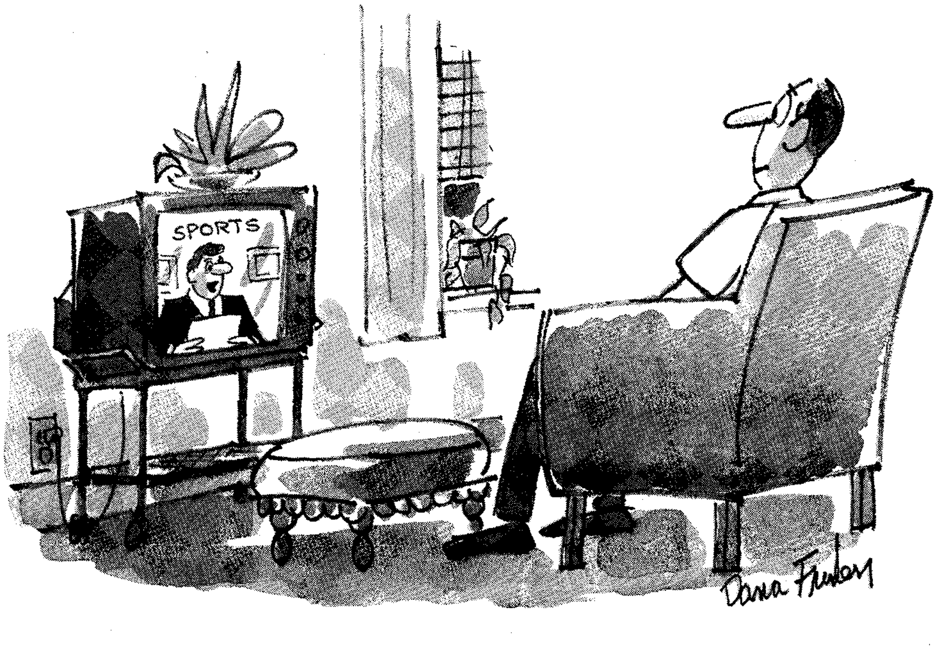
# OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

## IN THE SULTAN'S PALACE

LAST January, a week or so after my arrival in Bandar Seri Begawan, the tiny capital of Brunei Darussalam, I received an invitation from the Minister of Religious Affairs to attend the annual Koran-reading competition. From the moment I left my hotel, it was apparent that on this particular evening Bandar had been transformed. Ordinarily, Bruneians go out in the evening only infrequently, and by eight o'clock the wide boulevards of the capital and its tree-lined country lanes are largely deserted except for young men cruising in expensive, customized sports cars. This evening, though, the town and the Brunei River, which runs through it, were thronged. People were coming from every direction, seemingly oblivious of the heat, as I joined Brunei's establishment—all five hundred or so—congregating on the lawn of the magnificent Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque, a vast expanse of marble topped by a golden dome.

A number of the guests arrived by boat from a nearby water village called the Kampong Ayer, which dates from the sixteenth century and, with its wooden houses built on stilts, looks like a gathering of giant storks. Dozens of water taxis festooned with chains of bright-colored lights darted across the water, churning it choppy and brown. In normal times, they carry only small lanterns or no lights at all, and occasionally there are collisions after dark. Other guests arrived in chauffeured Mercedes limousines, accompanied by black Volvos—security cars. Some of the limousines had no license plates, and, in the crowd, it was difficult to identify their owners. In this deferential, hierarchical kingdom, you are simply expected to know. Men bowed to each other in courtly fashion as they arrived. Most of them were short and slim, with aquiline features and thick dark hair. They were all dressed in the *baju melayu*, which is Brunei's national dress and consists of color-coördinated trousers and a shirtlike top, accentuated by a *samping*, which resembles a kilt and is often made of silk intricately brocaded with gold thread. All the men wore *songkoks*—the traditional Malay caps. White caps were worn by those who had made the hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca; black or navy by those who had been knighted—the *pehins* and the *datos*—and by the hereditary nobles, the *pengirans*.

Before entering the women's section of the reviewing stand, I covered my head, as I had been instructed to do. The seats were awash with color; the women wore the *baju kourong*, which is the female national dress and consists of a long skirt and a tunic top of colorful pattern and design. Tonight, the principal colors were red, purple, and green. (There was no yellow, for yellow may be worn only by the royal family.) All the women wore *tudongs*, or head scarves; a few wore veils. They exhibited remarkable energy as they fanned themselves, and each other, with delicately hand-painted rice-paper fans. I was startled to see one of them pull a pack of English cigarettes from a golden evening bag, and I asked a young woman next to me if smoking was permitted.



*"The combined total of major-league batting averages was down three and a half points today. Outs outnumbered hits four to one, on a total volume of fourteen hundred at-bats."*

"Goodness, no," she said. "That must be someone who's old. Smoking was considered quite fashionable once."

She was a small, pretty woman of perhaps twenty-one, with a round face and deep-blue eyes. Cigarettes led to the subject of health, and she asked me if I played golf or badminton, assuring me, perhaps a bit too quickly, that doing so was the best way to keep fit. She played both, she said, and she added, somewhat ruefully, "What else can one do here?" She asked me if I liked her black-and-white *tudong*.

"It's very smart," I said.

She giggled and showed me the label—Armani—concealed in its folds.

The mosque itself, which dominates Bandar, is genuinely spectacular. Its size and magnificence dwarf everything else in the town. It is one of the largest mosques in Asia, perhaps in the world, and its great manicured lawn sweeps around a prayer hall that is two hundred and fifty-five feet long. The golden dome is covered by three million Venetian mosaic tiles; the minaret and cupolas are flecked with gold leaf; the floors are white marble; and the bathing pool, in which the faithful wash their feet before entering, is also tessellated. Without the mosque, and the Kampong Ayer, Bandar would be one of the least memorable capital cities I have ever known—a gloomy, languid town of some fifty-six thousand people encircled by a mosquito-infested swamp forest of mangrove trees and nipa palms. Its institutional architecture is bleak and barren—a sprawl of *celebrate*

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gray, green, and ochre concrete office buildings, shopping centers, and government ministries.

There was a stir as the State Mufti, Pehin Dato Hajji Ismail, arrived, wearing traditional Islamic dress—a long white robe and an astonishingly large turban, swathing his tiny head. The Mufti, who is seventy-seven, was the kingdom's senior religious official—a fiery speaker, whose views carried great weight, I'd been told. Some described him as a modern Rasputin; everyone was waiting to hear his views on the Gulf War.

"He's not a Bruneian," my young companion whispered. "He's from Malaysia, but he has been here since I was born."

Suddenly, sirens pierced the air from all directions. Nearly a hundred schoolboys rushed onto the lawn, beating drums and twirling tambourines. A mullah began chanting "*Allahu Akbar*." His high-pitched voice, electrically amplified, seemed to shriek. A fleet of sixty Harley-Davidson and Kawasaki motorcycle outriders careered across the lawn, presaging the arrival of a customized Bentley with a gold crest and a gold-plated grille. All present stood at attention in rigid, unmoving lines. "Long live Hassanal Bolkiah!" the mullah chanted. "*Allahu Akbar!* Long live Brunei!" The car drew up before the royal box, and out from behind the wheel stepped the Sultan of Brunei.

His full name—excluding various titles and decorations from abroad—is His Majesty Paduka Seri Baginda Sultan Hajji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan Negara Brunei Darussalam. When one is presented to him, I was told, it is far easier, and quite acceptable, to address him simply as "Your Majesty [pause] Sir." The Sultan is forty-five but looks younger. His hair is coal black; only his mustache shows the first signs of gray, and lines are just beginning to appear around his eyes. He is the twenty-ninth direct successor in one of the oldest royal dynasties in the world, and he has spent more than half his life on the throne. He is also one of the last remaining absolute monarchs in the world.

The Sultan, dressed in a dark-blue silk *baju* with diamond studs, a blue and lavender *samping*, embroidered with gold thread, and a black Malay cap, was accompanied by his three brothers as he entered the royal box. His face showed no emotion as ministers and court officials came forward and bowed and kissed his hand. They addressed him in archaic court language, and walked backward as they returned to their chairs.

When the greetings were done, the competition began. It was conducted rather like an old-fashioned spelling bee. The contestants, both men and women, soberly sang out from memory an assigned Koranic verse, under the tutelage of the mullah, his shriek increasingly amplified. The readings seemed to take forever. The heat had become intense, and little relief was afforded by electric fans here and there on the reviewing stand. Television lights made the heat even worse; the competition was being telecast live, because Koran reading was being promoted as a healthy national pastime.

A young woman dressed in a flowered *baju* and a white *tudong* rhythmically chanted her verse; she was followed by a gray-haired man with a dark, wizened face. He seemed an unlikely competitor, for most of the contestants were young. The Sultan frequently checked his watch; he appeared exceedingly bored. After two hours and ten minutes, the readings came to an end; the judges announced their decision, which was based on accuracy and quality of voice, and the Sultan presented the two first-place winners, a young woman and a young man, with cash prizes, each equivalent to thirty-five hundred dollars. Then he got in his Bentley and drove quickly away. The event of the season was over, and the reviewing stand emptied in a flash. As I watched the usually serene Bruneians rush away pell-mell, I wondered whether Koran-reading competitions could really keep them content.

BRUNEI—or, formally, Brunei Darussalam, a name meaning Brunei, Abode of Peace—is a melancholy place. Once a great empire, it is now hardly bigger than Delaware—a dot on the map, perched uneasily on the northwest coast of the island of Borneo. For three centuries, Brunei held sway over Borneo, but it now shares the island with the Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak, to the east and west, and the Indonesian state of Kalimantan, to the south. Only Brunei's northern border,

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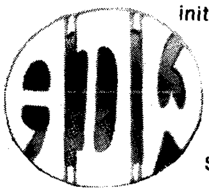

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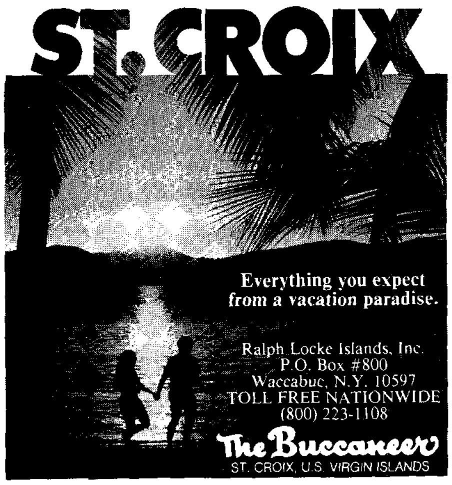

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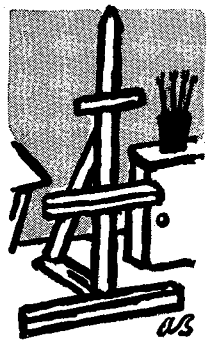
on the South China Sea, has remained intact. Its sinuous, murky rivers and its immensely wealthy courts have long attracted adventurers, romantics, pirates, headhunters, men of religion, and *bomohs*, or medicine men, who serve love potions made from flower petals and cure illness by dispensing water from magic wells. Today, it also attracts hairdressers, including my friend Tomo.

Tomo, it must be said, is no ordinary hairdresser. He specializes in manicuring royal fingernails and coiffing royal heads, and it was he who first told me about Brunei. We were in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, two hours from Bandar by plane, and although the Sultan himself was not one of his clients, Tomo had just returned that morning from the royal court. As he described footmen and carriages, royal barges, palaces of marble and gold, I imagined life in a medieval kingdom. "There are even umbrella bearers who carry a yellow parasol over the Sultan's head," Tomo said dreamily as he clipped my hair.



A few weeks later, I was having lunch with another friend. "Brunei," he said. "An extraordinary place. My dentist goes there twice a year to check the Sultan's teeth."

That settled it. I set out to find the Sultan of Brunei, knowing little about him except the length of his sideburns (an inch and a half), the condition of his teeth (extremely white), and allegations that he had given Oliver North ten million dollars to aid the Contras and that the money had been "lost."

I had plenty of time to contemplate those royal attributes as I sat around Bandar and waited. Finding the Sultan was not what proved so difficult; it was finding the aide to the Sultan, and the aide to the aide. In 1521, the Italian historian Antonio Pigafetta, who had visited Brunei with Magellan's fleet, wrote, "A chief told us that we should not speak to the King, and that if we wished anything, we should tell it to him, so that he could communicate it to one of higher rank. The latter would communicate it to a brother of the Governor, who was stationed in the smaller hall, and this man would communicate it by means of a speaking tube through a hole in the wall to one who was inside with the King."

Like his ancestors, the present Sultan is shielded from public view by an elaborate court system of *wazirs* and *cheteria*, each with his own colors, personal standard, and flag, and by ancient codes of protocol, hierarchy, and rank. The system appears to suit this Sultan very well, for he is aloof—something of a recluse, who obsessively guards his privacy. Until very recently, he seldom appeared in public except on ceremonial occasions, and the hierarchy that protected him allowed him a much sought-after anonymity. Yet it also allowed him to enjoy the loyalty and respect that almost unlimited wealth and power can command.

As I waited for somebody, anybody, to return my calls—preferably Pehin Badaruddin, one of the Sultan's top aides, who was responsible, in a manner of speaking, for the official part of my program during my stay—I searched about for things to do other than sit around the Sheraton Utama Hotel, whose coffee shop had the feel of a "Masterpiece Theatre" boarding house. We all had separate tables, but we came to know each other quite well—we "long-staying guests" of the hotel. There were Argentine polo professionals, with their wives and children; golf professionals; marksmen; and "gunners," as the artillery experts were called. There were oilmen, and jewellers from Paris. We all nodded to each other. And we all continued to sit.

That is simply the way things are in Brunei. The Bruneians have a word for *mañana*, but it doesn't have quite the urgency of the Spanish. One wakes up in the morning asking, "What isn't going to happen today?"

There is just one statue in Bandar—a somewhat rumpled Sir Winston Churchill flashing the V sign. It dominates the courtyard of the world's only museum devoted exclusively to him—an astonishing collection of Churchill's uniforms, books, and hats, his swords and toy soldiers and evening dress. When I visited it one morning, and was admiring a butterfly collection that the young Winston had assembled as a child, a guard approached me and said that the museum was about to close, because the staff was going to lunch.

"But it has only just opened," I said.

He replied, sharply, "We have our right to lunch!"

I asked him, gently, if he would please turn on the sound system, just for a moment, so I could hear "blood, toil, tears, and sweat."

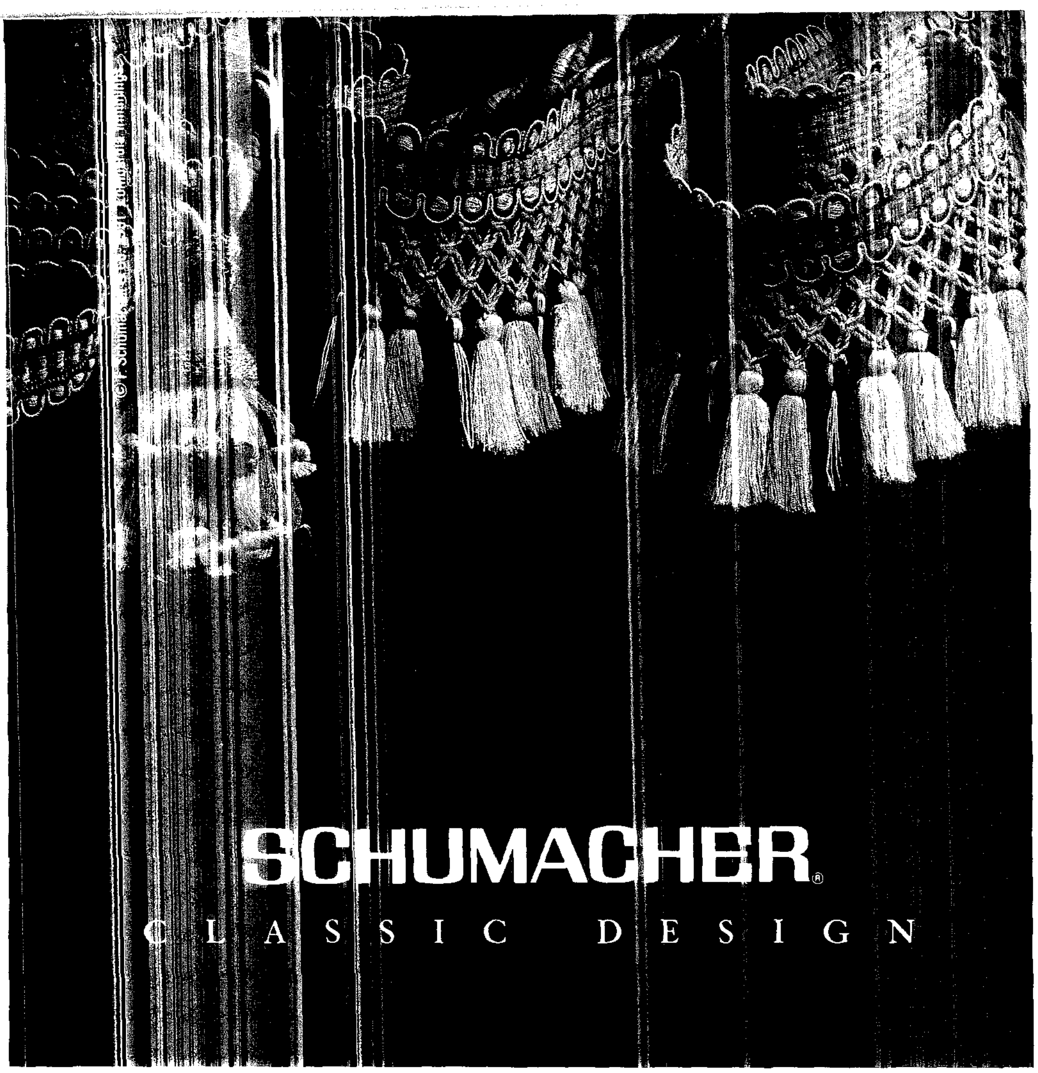
"It's broken," he said curtly, looking at his watch.

I told him that it was broken the last time I was there.

"It's always broken," he said. "Now, please, will you leave?"

What to do is a constant theme in Bruneian life; although the country is only two hours by plane from Singapore, it is amazingly isolated and remote. It has impressive museums, but no serious bookstores. It has no galleries, no concert halls, no political parties, no human-rights organizations, no discos. Most of its citizens are well educated, but it has no painters or poets of any note. It has no think tanks, no debating societies, and no Parliament. It has no night clubs, no bars—no alcohol. All it has, really, is the second-highest per-capita gross national product in the world. Its two little parcels of petroleum-rich jungle are awash with oil and natural gas and its two hundred and fifty thousand men, women, and children enjoy, according to official estimates, a per-capita G.N.P. of some $25,500 a year, second only to the per-capita G.N.P. of Switzerland. (In the United States, each citizen's share of the G.N.P. is $21,737 per year.) Moreover, Brunei has substantial foreign investments, and, for the last six years, income from these investments has been greater than revenues from the export of gas and oil.

I hoped to find out how much greater, but the chances were slim: "sensitive" is a word that pervades all conversations. Figures are closely held. Even the kilowatt cost of electricity is considered "confidential." You must simply work it out as best you can when you receive your bill. One of the kingdom's most enduring and tightly guarded mysteries surrounds the Sultan's personal wealth. He appears in the *Guinness Book of World Records* and *Fortune* magazine as the world's wealthiest man, with an estimated fortune of twenty-five to thirty-one billion dollars—citations that angered Bruneian officials and infuriated the Sultan himself. The officials point out that the figures might be valid only if they



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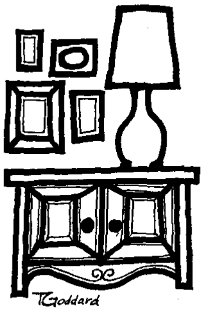
included the nation's entire reserves. (This small concession was my first clue to the sheer volume of Bruneian investment abroad.)

Four centuries ago, when Brunei was a powerful empire, ruling over all 290,320 square miles of Borneo (the island's name is a corruption of "Brunei") and much of the Philippines, it was also the region's dominant Islamic state. But gradually, with maladministration, palace plots and feuds, colonial incursions, and colonial raiders, Brunei began to shrink. In 1841, a grateful Sultan awarded Sarawak to an English adventurer who had helped him quell a revolt. (It has never been returned.) Other English empire builders then arrived, and in 1881 the British North Borneo Company was born; it held sway over Sabah. Meanwhile, the Dutch had moved into southern Borneo. If the Sultan hadn't come under British protection, in 1888, Brunei would probably have disappeared.

The country had few apparent resources of any consequence and, like the rest of Borneo, was most widely known for the export of edible birds' nests. (Chinese gourmets considered no other birds' nests on earth equal to the ones built by swifts in limestone caverns in Borneo.) Then, in 1929, oil was discovered, and it is still being discovered. (During an exceedingly unpleasant Japanese Occupation, many of the wells were burned to the ground.) By 1960, when other countries in the region were gaining independence, Brunei was clinging to Britain with ever greater tenacity. And since the British and their Dutch partners had exclusive control over Brunei's oil, the maintenance of the colonial link appears to have served both Brunei and Britain well.



Nevertheless, London was prodding the Sultan, Sir Omar Ali Saifuddien (the present Sultan's father, who is known as the architect of modern Brunei, and for whom the great mosque is named), to join the Federation of Malaysia, which was to come into being in 1963. Sir Omar, who was Brunei's supreme ruler, although the British protectors continued to handle matters of defense and foreign affairs, vacillated until December of 1962. Earlier that year, under the extreme persuasion of the British, he had agreed to Brunei's first (and only) experiment in limited democracy. In August, elections were held for seats in an advisory legislative council. A strongly anti-Malaysian, nationalist, and socialist party, the Brunei People's Party, captured all the seats. The British were caught by surprise, and Sir Omar was traumatized, for the Party was steadfastly opposed not only to Brunei's joining the proposed federation but to Britain's continuing presence in Borneo. Sir Omar postponed the council's meeting a number of times, and, partly as a result, at 2 A.M. on December 8th the People's Party launched a revolt.

It was not a stunning rebellion, as rebellions go. Nonetheless, Sir Omar declared a state of emergency, and the British brought in some two thousand troops, mostly Gurkhas from Singapore. (More than a quarter of a century later, approximately three thousand Gurkhas are still here, and the state of emergency is still in effect.) The rebellion was crushed within a week, and the rebels fled. Their leaders were granted political asylum in Indonesia and, eventually, Malaysia, and they are still there. Some two thousand others, mostly non-royal young men, were arrested, and more than thirty were held in prison for more than two decades; the last were released only last year. It was the first time in modern history that the Sultan's subjects had rebelled, and, although their loyalty to the Sultan was not in question (and is not now), that loyalty did not extend to the hereditary nobles, the Sultan's relatives, and palace friends. For if the revolt was essentially anti-Malaysian (and thus gained Indonesia's support), it was also partly grounded in the antagonism between the poor and the rich, and in the quick rise of the People's Party—the only party of consequence that Brunei has ever had.

In the end, Sir Omar did not join the Malaysian federation. And he was now more reluctant than ever to break the British link. Still, the break was inevitable, and full independence finally came on January 1, 1984, after assurances were obtained from Brunei's powerful neighbors Indonesia and Malaysia that they would not interfere in its affairs. The new nation's closest friend in the region was the city-state of Singapore: the two already had held joint military exercises, and Sir Omar was a long-standing friend of Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. Many observers believed that Brunei could never survive as an independent state. It was too small and too anachronistic. It alone, of the ten countries in the region, had retained its centuries-old life style and its traditional king. In a region being swept by change, Brunei was static, a doomed anomaly. However, it had set up one of the most enviable welfare states in the world: its citizens had free education, free health care, generous interest-free loans, even more generous pensions, and no income tax. Today, television sets abound, and, with nearly three cars per family, so do automobiles.

As I wandered around Bandar late one afternoon, eating sweets in the open-air market, clambering through the Kampong Ayer, and browsing in a fairly new and outrageously overpriced Japanese department store, the layers of the country's past seemed sometimes distinct, sometimes jumbled. There was the Kipling layer. In a sense, Brunei still has the feel of a remote colonial outpost. British judges in wigs and knee breeches preside over its courts, and Gurkhas guard its oil fields and the Sultan's throne. The Privy Council in London is the country's highest court of appeal, and in the Army officers' mess Bruneians speak with clipped British accents and carry swagger sticks. (The messes used to have the best-stocked bars in the country, but the Mufti banned alcohol at the beginning of this year.) There are also British teachers, pilots, and seconded military officers, and British missile-defense systems and light tanks. The Sultan's father once imported a traditional London taxi, and delighted in driving it around town. (Rolls-Royces and Range Rovers are the current Sultan's vehicles of choice.) Soccer is a national obsession, and polo the preferred royal sport. In other respects, Brunei, with its ruling triad of king, army, and church, resembled the medieval kingdom I had fantasized about. But as I strolled about I couldn't help wondering whether Brunei might not fit more comfortably into the Middle East. It has striking parallels with pre-revolutionary Iran, and, even more so, with Kuwait. It is tiny and relies heavily on an expatriate work force. Its economy is largely dependent on only two natural resources—gas and

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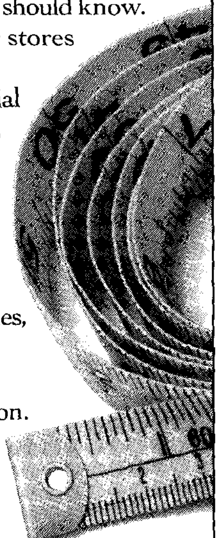

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oil—and its immense wealth is of fairly recent origin, grounded in the oil-price explosion of twenty years ago. It is officially Islamic. (Actually, only sixty-five per cent of its population is Malay Muslim. The rest consists of Chinese Christians or Buddhists, who account for some twenty per cent; expatriate workers; and indigenous tribes, who may be Muslim, Christian, or animist.) Its government, which functions on the basis of court politics, is to a large extent a family business, ruled by a monarch whose power is absolute.

TUTONG is a sleepy town of ten thousand people, open fields, and dust, where simple wooden houses with high gable roofs seem to totter precariously on even higher stilts. Hidden away between the Tutong River and the South China Sea, it boasts an Islamic college, a television satellite station, and a shop, which sells, among other things, blowpipes and tinned sardines.

I had been invited to Tutong by Pehin Badaruddin, the Sultan's aide, to join the official court party as the Sultan inaugurated a government housing scheme. It was one of his priority projects, and when it was completed home ownership would be guaranteed for all Bruneians. Officially, Pehin Badaruddin, a wiry, black-haired man in his late forties, with a slightly preoccupied air, was the Permanent Secretary to the Prime Minister, who happened to be the Sultan. He always seemed to be carrying mounds of papers or smoking a cigarette. An Islamic scholar, who had studied at Cairo's Al Azhar University, he had served as Ambassador to Indonesia for two years before being recalled to Bandar, in 1989, to become one of the most powerful men in the Sultan's court. He looked after a number of things: information, religion, and now—somewhat reluctantly—me. He had insisted that I must be in Tutong two hours before the Sultan arrived. "And under no circumstances may you speak to His Majesty," he said. "You are being invited to Tutong only to watch."

The housing project, which was on the outskirts of town, was a cluster of small whitewashed buildings with dark-red roofs; they were raised off the ground by concrete pillars, so that they resembled the traditional Malay houses of the Kampong Ayer. Just beyond them was arid grazing land, which gave onto the river, where the jungle began. Tropical rain forest and jungle cover seventy-five per cent of Brunei, and the kingdom's main towns are all on the coastal strip. Only a few miles upstream from Tutong, the interior consisted largely of tribal lands. A billowing green tent filled with rows of folding chairs had been set up in a field next to the housing project, and when we arrived it was already crowded. There was a scattering of women, but it was mostly a gathering of men, in colorful *baju melayus* and *songkoks.* Court officials had begun to assemble in the front rows. Higher officials sat on a dais, behind a high-backed red leather chair that bore the royal insignia and a golden royal crest.

I took my seat, as instructed, on the aisle of the third row. A young man next to me leaned over and whispered, "There's only an hour left."

"Why can't we move around?" I asked.

"His Majesty might arrive early," the young man said.

A red carpet was spread along the dusty floor. In the distance, a mullah chanted, calling the faithful to prayers. Mullahs, it seemed to me, were everywhere.

"We're very religious," the young man said. "We're more Islamic than the Arab states, and we're the only country in Southeast Asia where liquor is banned."

Did he approve of that?

"Of course not!"

That was the way many conversations went in Brunei, for the government had recently promulgated a new decree, known as Malay Muslim Monarchy, usually called M.I.B. It was the most controversial decree in years, and Bruneians were discussing and debating it endlessly. One suspects that it was meant to be a national ideology, for it emphasized conservative Islamic values, Brunei Malay culture, and the unifying role of kings. The decree's main defenders are in the Ministries of Education and Religious Affairs—largely a group of hard-line Islamic purists, trained in Koranic schools, who are led by the State Mufti, Pehin Ismail. The influence of the Mufti has grown considerably over the past year, not only in the mosques and in poorer neighborhoods but also in the palace, where he is a frequent visitor. Under his guidance, M.I.B. is a compulsory subject in the university and schools (where normally well-behaved students have wailed in protest), and was responsible for the ban on alcohol and for a new dress code: the *tudong* is in, and bluejeans are out.

The new Islamization has divided even the Sultan's court and Cabinet, with the ministers now labelled "ideologues" (M.I.B.ers) or "pragmatists" (more Western-oriented and secularist). The latter seem larger in number but smaller in voice. One of them told me, "It is simply not possible to criticize, for how can you criticize the government without appearing to criticize the King?" He said that his primary concern was that M.I.B. could transform Brunei from a relatively relaxed Muslim nation into a theocratic Islamic state. His unease is shared by the Chinese community (which is the backbone of the fledgling private sector and represents Brunei's limited commercial flair) and also by foreign businessmen. For, whatever M.I.B. may be, one thing is clear: it is emphatically neither multiracial nor secularist.

Overhead we heard rotors beating the air, and the royal helicopter, a Sea King piloted by the Sultan himself, came into sight. It disappeared behind the trees as the Sultan began his descent. A court official rushed toward me and grabbed my arm. "Quickly," he said. "His Majesty has said that you are to be presented to him. You're to be in the receiving line."

SULTAN HAJJI HASSANAL BOLKIAH is an Anglophile. He attended Sandhurst, was knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 1972, and has the largest private collection of Rolls-Royces in the world—a hundred and fifty-three at the most recent count. He assumed the throne, reluctantly, in 1967, at the age of twenty-one, when his father, Sir Omar, shocked both the British and the Bruneians by deciding to abdicate. His precise reason remains unclear, but I was told by one member of the court that it was a calculated gamble by Sir Omar to forestall British pressure for democratic reform. Young Hassanal, inexperienced and exceedingly shy, nearly had to be abducted from Sandhurst, the official said. It was only a few weeks before his passing-out parade, and his resentment at the timing still lingers.

The relationship between father and son was complex, and the strong-willed Sir Omar remained a power behind the throne until shortly before his death, in 1986. Meanwhile, Hassanal embarked on what is judiciously referred to as "a youthful fling." He became a well-known figure on the international stage of jet-setters and the immensely wealthy élite, frequenting the clubs and casinos of London, Paris, and Monte Carlo, often in the company of Adnan Khashoggi, the Mideast arms dealer. Hassanal was reputed to be a high-stakes gambler, a womanizer, a young man with an irrepressible urge to buy cars, polo ponies, hotels, and planes. Back in Bandar, Sir Omar was displeased.

An extremely subtle contest for power between the aging patriarch and his increasingly independent son reached its climax in 1985, four years after Hassanal, very much over his father's objections, took a second wife—a former airline hostess named Mariam Bell, who is of Bruneian, British, and Japanese blood. (His first marriage, to a cousin, Saleha, had been arranged by Sir Omar; it remains intact.) The second marriage nearly cost the Sultan his throne. For months, father and son aired their dispute over Radio Television Brunei, to the incredulity of Bruneians. Never had people tuned in so intently to the airwaves. Finally, both the Army and the police pledged their loyalty to Hassanal, and, with a last gallant flourish, Sir Omar publicly conceded that he was no longer king.

The Sultan has since consolidated his power and named himself Prime Minister and Minister of Defense. His eldest brother, Prince Mohamed, who is considered the most liberal and pragmatic member of the royal family, is the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and his youngest brother, Prince Jefri, who excels at polo, is the Minister of Finance. The third brother, Prince Sufri, holds no official post. The Sultan freed the country's political prisoners, and he permitted the establishment of a political party, but he very quickly banned it when its leaders called on him to hold elections, step down as Prime Minister, and become a constitutional monarch. (They were arrested but have since been released.) Then, abruptly, the Sultan's brief flirtation with political liberalization came to an end.

In recent years, the Sultan has spent

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considerably less time abroad, although he still frequently weekends in Singapore or Hong Kong and spends at least two months a year in London, where he owns the Dorchester Hotel and three estates. (Some years ago, rumors that he had secretly acquired control of Harrods caused a tremendous row.) Diplomats say that outwardly, at least, he has adopted a more pious, sober image of late, but he is said to be most comfortable with the Army, amid reminders of his Sandhurst life.

Although the Sultan is a serious Muslim, he is neither fanatical nor doctrinaire, and has warned against the dangers of fundamentalism. He is often described as progressive (in a monarchical sense), and as potentially more of a political reformer than his father was. And in the present arrangement, where M.I.B. has divided his court into two still congenial camps, the Sultan would seem to sit more comfortably on the side of the pragmatists. He enjoys London, and the ideologues don't; he enjoys living in a grand style, and the ideologues don't. He collects Impressionist art, and, with total absorption, plays polo, badminton, and golf. (The ideologues are not very sporty, and most of them have never so much as mounted a horse.) Yet the Sultan appears to have thrown his weight behind the ideologues and M.I.B., and many people I spoke with questioned why he had played his Islamic card, and debated whether it was a concession to militant Islam or an attempt to checkmate it. The Islamic tiger could prove exceedingly difficult for the Sultan to ride.

"It's rather like the McCarthy era in America," one court pragmatist told me, after prudently requesting anonymity. "If you're not an M.I.B.er, you're seen as not loyal to the Sultan. I'm much concerned that this thing could be taken to an extreme. And now, with M.I.B. coinciding with the Gulf War, it makes it even more difficult, more delicate. For God's sake, every Friday the fiery sermons in the mosques! Every night, I turn on my TV and there's Saddam Hussein saying his prayers. Doesn't anyone realize that we should be on the side of Kuwait?" He paused, and then said, "If we learn nothing from Saddam Hussein's swallowing up Kuwait, then we're finished. And public opinion here scares me to death. The students and the mullahs call this a jihad, and they are overwhelmingly pro-Saddam."

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and then we run

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in dreams alone
then all the outcry slays us

but here
give me
the key into worlds

—Adelaida López Mejía

(*Translated, from the Spanish, by Elizabeth Macklin.*)

• •

I asked why he didn't speak to the Sultan.

"No one dares openly tell him, 'Don't carry it too far.' But the Muslimization of Brunei just won't work. I'm as solid a Brunei Malay Muslim as any M.I.B.er is. For me, the Sultan is a pillar of stability, the only person, the only institution, that can command respect. My God, this is not a nation of republicans." He added, with a sad smile, "Yes, I suppose if this really gets out of hand one of us will have to try to get the Sultan's ear."

As I stood on the dusty red carpet in the receiving line, wedged between Pehin Badaruddin and the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs, I tried to remember all the protocol rules I had been exhaustively briefed on in advance.

In the Sultan's presence, if we were walking I had to remain, along with the court officials, a respectful distance of a few yards behind. The Sultan would walk with his brothers. (One or another of them always accompanies him during public appearances or on official trips.) If we were seated, I could not cross my legs, and my posture had to be absolutely erect—there was to be no slouching, no arm slung across the back of a chair. If it was absolutely necessary to point, the pointing should be done with an inverted thumb, preferably the right one, but, even more preferably, I should not point at all. I could wear nothing yellow, of course. I could wipe but under no circumstances could I blow my nose. In receiving lines, it was absolutely forbidden for me, as a foreigner, to kiss the Sultan's hand, as his subjects did. (Foreign saliva, presumably.) And the sternest admonition of all was that I could not speak to the Sultan, or speak in his presence, until he had spoken first. When I was presented to him, I was not to touch his hand unless he first extended his: in the matter of handshaking I was told to "play it by ear."

Now, as I stood at attention, ticking protocol items off on my fingers, which I held clasped tightly behind my back, I almost failed to notice a customized Range Rover hurtling onto the field. The receiving line rushed forward, crashing through potted geraniums and knocking them to the ground. In the confusion, I tried to spot the Sultan, who had been driving the Range Rover. Then, without warning, he was standing in front of me and extending his hand. I took it. Silence. Everybody froze. I glanced quickly at Pehin Badaruddin, but he, characteristically, had bowed his head to avert the Sultan's gaze. More silence. The Sultan looked at me quizzically.

I finally said, not knowing what else to do, "It's a pleasure to meet you, Your Majesty." And I told him my name.

"Yes," he responded simply "I already know."

He then proceeded down the receiving line, accompanied by Prince Jefri, and strode into the tent. We all dashed in behind him, and the program began. Forty keys were presented to forty new homeowners, a mullah chanted prayers, endless officials made endless speeches, and the Sultan, dressed in a black safari suit, sat stiffly in the elevated red leather chair.

"We must leave as quickly as possible when the program is over," Pehin Badaruddin's aide whispered as the mullah droned on. "Not so quickly as to be ahead of His Majesty, of course, but quickly enough to be directly behind him when he starts up his car."

There was near-chaos as the Sultan left the stage: everyone quickly moved backward and away, usually stepping on the toes of the person behind. We hurried to our Pajero—a Mitsubishi bush wagon, the new status symbol of Brunei's élite—and weaved, somewhat recklessly, into the royal motorcade. The Sultan, accompanied only by Prince Jefri, was driving his Range Rover in the lead, and he drove at considerably high speed.

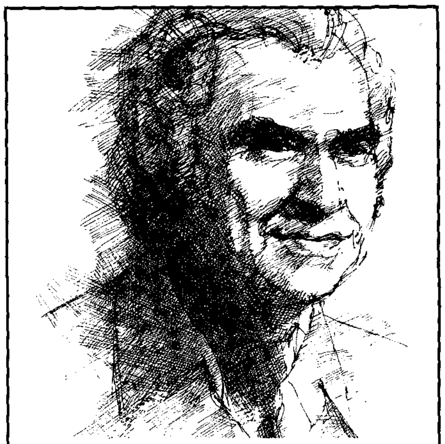
In a sense, all this was quite new for the Sultan. Only during the last year had he begun trekking through villages, making snap inspections of public projects, and generally showing himself more frequently to his subjects. "I think he realized that if this is to be an absolute state he has to rule absolutely; he has to be an active monarch," a foreign ambassador had told me. "So he has gone from being rather laissez-faire to this hyperactivity. He marched through Bandar's hospital recently, and heads rolled. It's a brand-new hospital, but it was in an abominable state. He has even done an inspection of a new car park. Can you imagine George Bush checking out a car park? But, to be quite honest, I think he'd prefer to have someone else do it. Ideally, he's a constitutional monarch."

Would there be change? Political reform?

"We find it inconceivable that they won't do something," the Ambassador had said.

ON the surface, little ruffled Brunei's gentle pace, and the Sultan sat securely on his throne, with secular, religious, and military power firmly in his hands. And his kingdom, unlike many nations in Asia, had a relatively tranquil racial atmosphere. Brunei Malays ran the government, Chinese ran the private sector, and tribal groups made sago, a starchy substance from palm trees, in the hinterland. Civil servants were encouraged to take up polo or golf, and Bruneians spent hours shopping or driving about in their automobiles. Yet as I began to travel about the kingdom I found frustrations, and a feeling of irresolution and drift. A growing number of educated Bruneians were not at all certain what direction their country was heading in.

The University of Brunei Darussalam, or U.B.D., which had opened only six years ago, was a topic of frequent debate. The kingdom placed immense emphasis on education—more than half the population was under the age of twenty-one—but Bruneians preferred to study abroad: there was a prestige quotient in going to London, and a religious quotient in going to Cairo's Al Azhar University. And, since courses now had an increasingly ideological content, some Bruneians believed that U.B.D. was being used as a training ground—and political base—for proponents of M.I.B. Teachers traditionally played an important role in Malay society, and if the university could produce two hundred graduates a year they would be more than enough to carry M.I.B. through the towns and villages, and even into the hinter-



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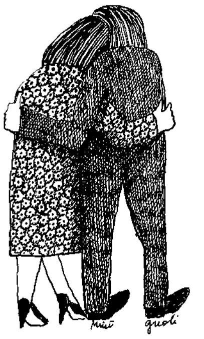
land. And the kingdom's four major M.I.B. ideologues all had university links: the Mufti (who, of course, was Malaysian, not Bruneian); the Minister of Education; his half brother (who was part Javanese); and my new acquaintance Pehin Badaruddin, the Permanent Secretary.

A U.B.D. professor, whom I shall call Martin, had offered to drive me to the campus, which was just outside the town. Like all government employees, he was not permitted to speak to journalists, under the terms of an elaborate secrecy agreement he had signed. It was an endless list of things that could not be discussed, among them salaries, figures, religion, the Sultan, and politics. Martin was a foreigner, as was over ninety per cent of the university's teaching staff. Over one-third of the kingdom's work force consisted of expatriates, but the demographics of the university—and also of Brunei's Islamic College and its Arabic schools—departed from the norm in that they included a large number of highly conservative professors from Malaysia, Indonesia, Egypt, and Pakistan. I often saw them around Bandar, in their turbans and long robes, walking silently in single file, as if performing a secret military drill. "It shows the direction education is taking," Martin now said.



There was a dreadful stench rising from the Kampong Ayer as we passed by: more than half of Bandar's population lived in the antique water village, some without indoor plumbing, and it was low tide. Yet just across the water from the weather-beaten homes cars belonging to the Kampong's residents were parked for miles along the road. Some Kampongites commuted to them in their own fibreglass boats; others took water taxis across. The present Sultan was Brunei's first to have been born on land. His father, Sir Omar, was born in the Kampong Ayer.

Five minutes beyond the Kampong, Martin waved a hand toward the other side of the road.

"There it is," he said. "Our own Versailles."

I looked out the window at a complex of buildings that was a bewildering mixture of gilded arches and Doric and Ionic columns, with touches of rococo here and there. It was a palace of one of the members of the royal family. We soon passed another, and this one reminded me of a Thai temple compound: spread over many acres were red lacquer buildings topped with glistening golden domes. Brunei had few signs of ostentatious wealth aside from the royal residences, but those were extraordinary. Next, we came to one of twenty-three so-called mini-palaces, which were being built to house V.I.P. guests at the upcoming Jubilee celebrations, marking the Sultan's twenty-fifth anniversary on the throne. A royal architect had told me that each mini-palace would cost about ten million dollars; furnishings would add seven million to the cost, and then there would be paintings and art work, which would cost sixty million dollars, or perhaps a bit more. No one was quite certain, he said, what would happen to the mini-palaces when the visiting dignitaries left.

The mini-palaces were guarded by Gurkhas, but as we stopped in front of one of them the guards paid us little heed. Workmen were laboring furiously to construct a huge fence; soon this palace would disappear completely from public view. "Sensitive," Martin told me. I had already heard that some of the mullahs in the Kampong Ayer had begun grumbling discreetly about the expense.

As we continued toward the university, we passed a sprawling erosion embankment along the road. Across its gray slate was scrawled in bold white letters, "To love Brunei is to love Iraq."

A group of students was waiting for me on campus when we arrived. They were all women of about twenty-one, small and pretty, wearing *bajus* and *tudongs*, and no makeup.

I asked them to describe a typical student at U.B.D. "The girls are much brighter, more interested in learning, than the boys, who are essentially lazy," one of them said. "The boys don't study—they only want a degree. But they'll become the department directors and full professors."

"Because of religion," another one said.

"And, of course, the brighter boys are all studying abroad," a third volunteered.

I asked if that presented problems.

"Of course," she replied. "How can we possibly meet acceptable men, and find a husband?" She giggled nervously.

I asked them what they thought about the Gulf War, and was not much surprised when they answered, almost in one voice, "We like Saddam." They talked about the Palestinians, and the jihad, and told me that American forces were destroying Saudi Arabia's holy shrines, in Mecca and Medina.

Where on earth, I asked, had they heard that?

"In the mosque." They accepted it as simple fact.

As we talked, it became clear that President Bush's new world order looked suspiciously like old-fashioned imperialism here. (So alarmed was the government over the kingdom's pro-Iraqi mood—some ninety per cent of Bruneians were believed to favor Saddam—that it issued a balanced statement with a slight tilt favoring the United States-backed coalition in the Gulf. The statement was meant to show the Sultan's subjects where the royal court stood, a Foreign Ministry official told me. I asked him if a poll had been taken after the statement. "Yes," he said, "and public opinion was still ninety per cent pro-Saddam.")

The girls told me that, like everyone else, they were hooked on CNN for coverage of the war, but it was available only in two thirty-minute segments daily, via Malaysian TV. Pehin Badaruddin had chosen not to broadcast CNN over Brunei TV, even though the kingdom had a satellite link; only members of the royal family were permitted to have a private satellite dish.

As the girls went on talking, I was struck by the fact that they were not isolated. They had travelled, and knew what was happening abroad. They lived in a vibrant, cosmopolitan region, whose economies were growing faster than any others worldwide. The girls compared themselves with young women in Muslim Malaysia or in Singapore. And they were restless and bored.

Before leaving, I asked them what they enjoyed doing most.

Their faces lighted up. "Watching video," one of them said. "We love videos, especially love stories and ac

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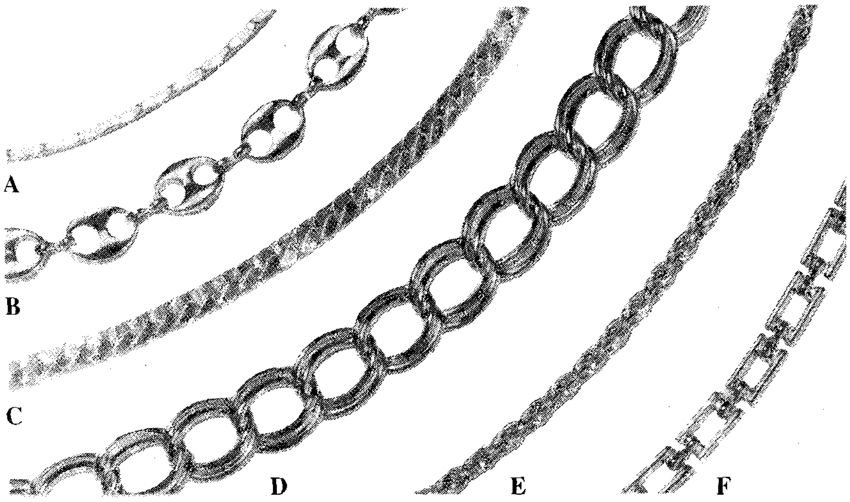

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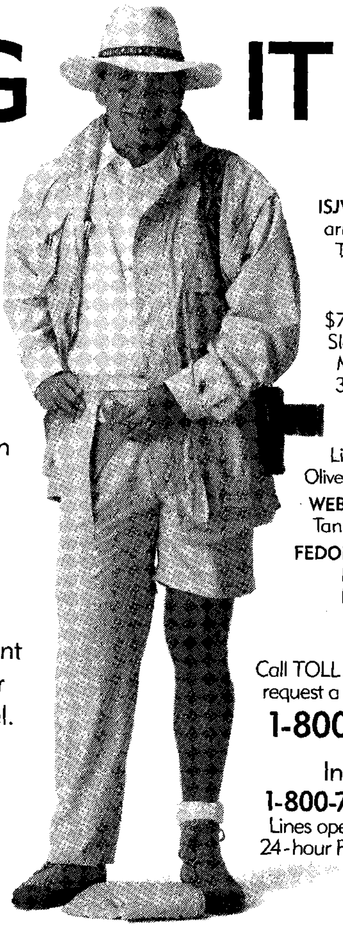

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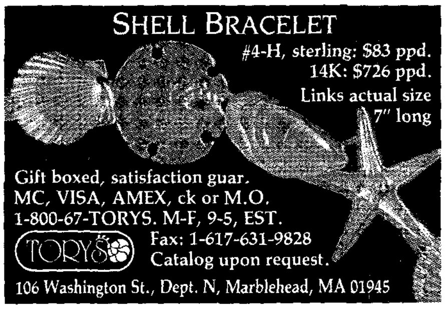

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tion films. 'Ghost' is a particular favorite. I've seen it three times. And are you watching the new series on Malaysian TV—Judith Krantz's 'I'll Take Manhattan'? Oh, I love it. It's *so* sexy." They all giggled.

MARTIN had heard of the black market but had not been there before, so we secured a hand-drawn map from a friend and set off. Leaving the main highway, we drove through a maze of tree-lined lanes, came to a dirt track, and finally reached a warehouse, which was near the water's edge. Huge transport trucks were being unloaded, and small men struggled with large boxes as they carried them down wooden gangplanks. All around us, cars were being backed up and loaded; doors quickly opened and closed; Mercedeses, Toyotas, and Pajeros drove in, as others sped off. After a wait of some minutes, we were permitted inside the warehouse.

There were cases and cases of spirits, beer, and wine stacked from floor to ceiling. The warehouse must have measured at least three thousand square feet, and it was full. We wandered through narrow aisles between the crates, but much of the merchandise was simply too high, or too far back, for us even to approach.

"You can buy what you can get to," one of the merchants said. "And I sell it only by the case." He was a tall, broad-shouldered man, with a paunch. Here and there, presumably for cover, were cases of Skippy peanut butter and Hellmann's mayonnaise. He told us that prices were extremely low. "Too much competition," he said. When we asked him where all this was coming from, he replied, "Everywhere," and laughed. The goods came primarily across the border from Malaysia or by boat from Singapore, he said. (A civil servant had told me that when he made a liquor run across the border to Sarawak the previous weekend he had been caught in a two-hour traffic jam.)

"Too cheap. No profit," the merchant complained. "Hurry, hurry, you must go now. Too many people outside. More people than at the National Day parade!"

THE next morning, I decided to have breakfast in my room and catch up on some reading before attending a wedding, which didn't begin until noon. I turned first to the *Borneo Bulletin*, Brunei's only newspaper. It purports to be privately owned, but the owner is a company controlled by the royal family, and it is published under the court's watchful eye. One of the editors had told me that the paper practiced self-censorship. As long as it avoided issues of religion or race, and anything to do with the monarchy beyond protocol, or political topics that might be deemed "sensitive," its editors could publish whatever they wished. I glanced at the headlines: "APE ON THE RUN IN KUALA BELAIT: GURKHAS ESCAPE ATTACK," "THE HISTORY OF GUM CHEWING," "THE RISK OF HAY FEVER IN WEARING TIGHT UNDERWEAR." There were also, of course, stories on the progress of the Gulf War, featuring pictures of a beaming Saddam.

Next, I opened the international edition of *Time*. The cover story was about breast cancer, but all illustrations of breasts had been blacked out, both on the cover and inside. How many hours—or even days—had it taken men with large black markers to go through hundreds of issues, meticulously expunging five breasts?

Later in the day, a distinguished-looking, middle-aged noblewoman at the wedding told me she was furious about the defacing of *Time*. She and a nascent group of like-minded women, whom she described as "basically radical" in approach, were attempting to set up awareness programs for women in health, nutrition, and consumer affairs. She told me she was among the first women in the kingdom to have been educated in the West.

We were sitting in one of the drawing rooms of the Sultan's director of protocol, whose daughter was being married in a ceremony lasting five days. The room was furnished with settees covered in deep red velvet and with high-backed wooden chairs, their tops engraved in elaborate patterns that resembled the royal crest. Men and women were seated in separate rooms, and children, wearing golden prayer medallions on thick gold chains, scampered about on the verandas or distributed wedding gifts.

I asked the woman, who wore a *baju* of intricate silk brocade and whose neck was adorned with sapphires and diamonds, what she thought about M.I.B.

"I think it's totally idiotic," she said.

"A Brunei Malay is always loyal to the Sultan. We even have a proverb that says that loyalty to the Sultan is our way of life." She shook her head, and then went on, "But whether the Sultan is head of state or head of government is another thing. When he wears both hats"—the previous Sultan had relied on the Chief Minister to run the government—"the bottom line is that it's so much more difficult to change anything, or even make any proposals for change. And this arrangement is not good for the monarch. By being Prime Minister, he deprives himself of a way out. The Sultan must bear responsibility for all the mistakes of the government. Personally, I think the entire structure is basically unsound."

THERE was a time when many governments considered it an absolute necessity to send only a polo-playing ambassador to Brunei; being astride a pony was one of the few promising ways of meeting the Sultan. But now he played much less frequently. His new passions were badminton and golf, and I did not meet a single foreign ambassador who was not accomplished in both. Nevertheless, one of the Argentine polo professionals at the hotel had said that the Sultan was supposed to ride that afternoon. My source was part of an intricate network of informers I had set up in an attempt to track the Sultan's movements, for although I besieged Pehin Badaruddin's office with requests for an interview with the Sultan, I had little hope of success. During his entire reign, the Sultan had hardly ever given interviews. The polo professionals, the golf professionals, and the gunners and marksmen at the hotel were mostly here at royal expense, and they saw the Sultan nearly every day. And, although they were aghast when I suggested that they carry a note from me requesting an interview, they did keep me informed about where he was likely to be. If he rode or shot or golfed at the palace there was little I could do. But, in the event that he ventured out to the Royal Polo Club, at Jerudong, I had made arrangements to be permitted inside.

Jerudong was an exquisite place on the South China Sea, with golf courses, clubhouses, shooting ranges, and three polo fields. The complex was spread

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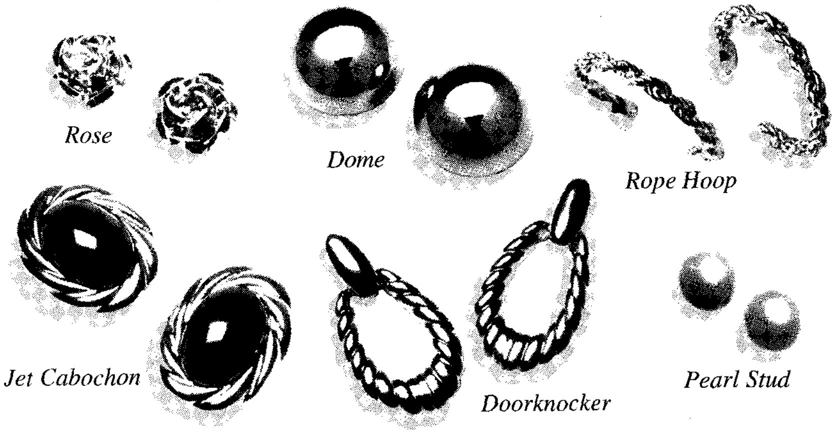

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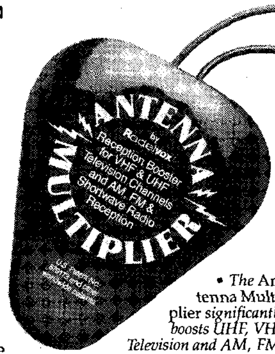
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over many miles and included beach houses and a number of palaces, most of them belonging to Prince Jefri, the Minister of Finance.

I had come out to Jerudong with a diplomat and his wife. As we waited for the players to arrive, we wandered around the grounds, visiting the stables first. The Sultan and his brothers had the finest, and possibly the largest, collection of polo ponies in the world, numbering some six hundred and fifty. They were mainly from Argentina, and were looked after by resident Argentine trainers and grooms. One of the club's managers insisted that I see for myself that the stables were not air-conditioned. (Other journalists had reported that they were, much to everyone's distress.) "The only air-conditioned stables are for the sick ponies," the manager said.

We wandered down to a man-made beach, and then looked at a man-made lake, near the Istana Darut Taqwa, a royal guesthouse, where Nelson Mandela had recently stayed. We had hoped to see one of Prince Jefri's palaces, but were stopped by a posse of Gurkhas along the road, who grimly pointed to a sign—a drawing of a man shooting another man in the back. Beneath it, in both Malay and English, was the warning "This is a restricted place."

Needing no further persuasion, we quickly returned to the polo clubhouse. Prince Jefri, some Army generals, and several Argentines were mounting up. Protocol was observed: the Prince mounted apart from the others, and, for reasons that eluded me, his pony alone was permitted to wear blue socks. But the Sultan wasn't there; my network of informers had failed me once again.

BRUNEI is so wealthy that it could exist quite comfortably without exporting any of its oil or gas. The earnings on its foreign reserves alone amount to two billion dollars a year. (The combined income from the export of gas and oil is some billion and a half dollars a year.) The kingdom's current account is in constant surplus, and it has no foreign debt. Indeed, there is so much money that one of Brunei's great problems is how best to invest it.

The one man in the kingdom who could tell me precisely what I wanted to know about Brunei's substantial reserves was Dato Abdul Rahman Karim, the managing director of the Brunei Investment Agency (B.I.A.), which handled the kingdom's investment portfolio; he was also the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance. But Dato Rahman was a much sought-after person, nearly as elusive as the Sultan. Since he did not play polo, my hotel network was no help. Then, one afternoon, I met him, very much by chance, and he cheerfully invited me for dinner the following night.

We went to a Malay restaurant in a new shopping mall, accompanied by six of Dato Rahman's aides. Since Brunei plays its financial cards extremely close to its chest, I wasn't at all certain what to expect. (The kingdom's wish to maintain a low profile and its instinct for secrecy are perhaps best summed up by a poster that hangs in many government offices. It reads, "I know. You know. We all know. Is it necessary for all of us to know?") I was therefore pleasantly surprised by Dato Rahman's candor. He was an intelligent and immensely likable man in his late forties who had studied at the London School of Economics and had recruited the best of Brunei's talent into B.I.A. He spent as much time in Los Angeles (where B.I.A. owns the Beverly Hills Hotel) and Singapore (where B.I.A. owns a number of hotels) as he did in Brunei.

I began by asking him how large the kingdom's foreign reserves were.

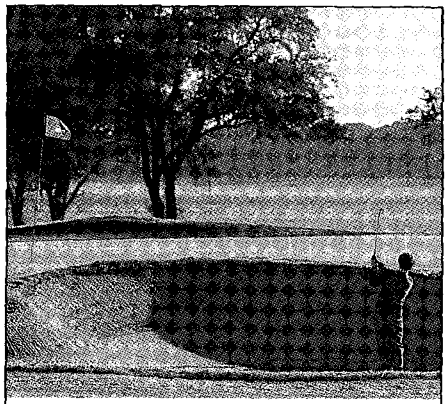
"Huge," he replied.

I persisted, giving him a number of choices from various estimates I had amassed.

He said that between twenty-five and twenty-seven billion dollars was the best estimate. (That worked out to a hundred and fifty thousand dollars per citizen.) B.I.A. itself managed some forty per cent of the funds on a day-to-day basis, he told me. The remainder was divided among eight foreign institutions, including Morgan Guaranty, Bankers Trust, and Citibank.

How did he manage such vast amounts of money?

"We have very clear guidelines on investment," he said. "We're mostly interested in North America, Europe—only Western Europe, of course—Ja-



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pan, and the Pacific, and we're now beginning to invest in ASEAN'—the Association of South East Asian Nations. "From fifty to sixty per cent of our money is in bonds, and from forty to fifty per cent is in stocks and shares—of course, only blue-chip companies, like Mercedes, Siemens, I.B.M., Sony, and some banks. Then, there's the cash. We put it mostly into real estate, but only income-producing properties. We don't speculate. And breweries and casinos are totally off limits, so forget about Donald Trump."

I asked him how many properties B.I.A. owned and where they were.

"Much too sensitive," he answered, smiling, and passed me a plate of chilied rice.

Did B.I.A. have properties in the United States?

"Yes," he replied. "The Beverly Hills Hotel. Of course, you know about that. And there are office buildings in Chicago and Washington. We have only six properties in the United States. We started buying, really, only seven years ago. Yes, I guess we're buying about one a year."

He now asked me a question: "What do you think of the Plaza Hotel?"

I said that I enjoyed it immensely for high tea.

"But it's a problem," he said. 'Its deficit is huge. There are problems with the unions, and the building's old. Besides, I don't like the way Ivana has redecorated at all."

By sheer coincidence, as he mentioned Mrs. Trump I choked on a chili and had a coughing fit.

"Take salt," he told me.

I tried it, and it worked.

"Now, where were we?" he asked. "Ah, yes, the investment income."

"Is it two billion dollars a year?" I wheezed.

"Yes," he said. "Now take a bit more salt."

Regaining my composure, I asked him when the kingdom's investment income had surpassed the revenue from oil and gas.

"Since 1985, it's been marginally more," he said. Then he smiled broadly, and added, "But the margin keeps rising." Over the last seven years, he said, Brunei's average return on its foreign reserves had been about seventeen per cent a year.

Was the Sultan therefore the richest man in the world?

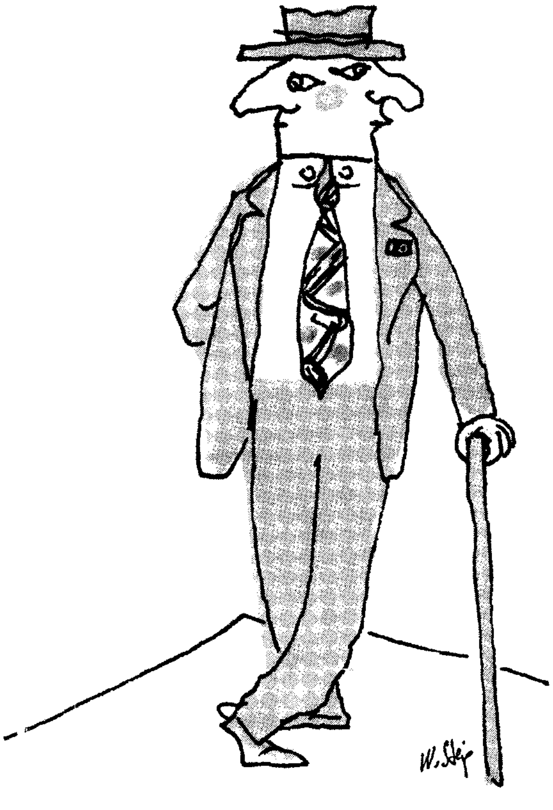
"No comment."

He then insisted that the kingdom's funds managed by B.I.A. were quite separate from the Sultan's personal wealth.

But how did one draw the line, I wanted to know. The immense concentration of power in the Sultan's hands, coupled with the fact that two of his brothers controlled the Cabinet's other key ministries, had led foreign businessmen and diplomats to conclude that the line between the private purse and the public purse was perhaps more blurred in the kingdom than in any other country that came readily to mind.

"No comment," he said. "Now do have some fish."

A FEW days later, I attended the opening ceremonies for the Legal Year; it was a wonderfully Victorian morning of British judges, who had come in from Hong Kong, appearing at the Supreme Court building in white wigs and knee breeches and deep-crimson robes. A brass band played "Gold and Silver" as the Chief Justice inspected a smart honor guard. I glanced around and spotted Pehin Badaruddin in the crowd.



*Man of Two Minds*

Rushing up to him, I inquired, as I did nearly every day, "Have you asked His Majesty if he will see me?"

His answer had always been the same: "No, I haven't had time." But on this occasion he said, rather casually, "Oh, didn't I mention that? His Majesty has agreed to receive you."

"When?"

"At two o'clock."

"Today?"

"Yes."

"But you've given me no notice. I have nothing to wear."

Pehin Badaruddin seemed to think my dilemma a rather foolish one, and went off to greet another court official. "Don't be late," he said.

As I was driven toward the palace, I thought of my hairdresser, Tomo, and also remembered something that a journalist friend had said. She had come to the kingdom with Mrs. Thatcher, and had told me how awesome it was to approach the Istana Nurul Iman in a royal barge. The palace sprawls over three hundred acres, and has seventeen hundred and eighty-eight rooms; its roofs billow out around two immense, gold-plated domes. My friend's party had been escorted from the river to the palace by ceremonial guards carrying silver lances, resplendent in black-and-gold uniforms. They had entered the palace through a series of Italian-marble archways, which led to sixteen-foot-high hand-carved mahogany doors. Once inside, they had been escorted to the throne room through a series of gold mosaic arches, and had walked beneath twelve crystal chandeliers, each weighing more than a ton, and each depicting the royal crest. I thought, Wait till I tell Tomo about this.

But when we arrived at the palace I was taken in through an underground car park. Neither the aide to Pehin Badaruddin nor the aide to the aide had come to the hotel to accompany me to the palace, so I had only their driver to direct me, and his command of English was slight.

"There," he said, pointing to a door, and I entered the largest palace in the world. I must have been in a storage area, or per-

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haps the archives, for I wandered down the corridor and glanced through doorways into rooms that were filled with filing cabinets and cases of food. But all the rooms were unoccupied—it was the tea break, I supposed. Finally, I met two men in the corridor.

"Where is the reception area?" I asked.

"Whom have you come to see?" they politely inquired.

"His Majesty." There was a moment of incredulity, then a gasp.

We scurried down the hall, and they found a Gurkha. He found another Gurkha, and this second Gurkha took me in an elevator to what I think was the third floor. But we changed elevators a number of times, and also rode some escalators, and I wasn't absolutely certain where we were. At last, we found Pehin Badaruddin, who exclaimed, in utter exasperation, "Where have you been? You're ten minutes late!"

"I've been in the cellar," I said.

Fortunately for everyone, the Sultan's appointments were running late, and I sat with Pehin Badaruddin and two other court officials in a receiving room outside the Sultan's private office. Pehin Badaruddin instructed me to remove my shoes. The furniture was Louis XIV and Chippendale, with Ming vases and gold-leaf tables scattered here and there. We were in the family quarters, and as we waited I realized that we must be near the palace zoo: from time to time, I heard the bleating of animals.

After several minutes, a bearer in livery appeared and ushered Pehin Badaruddin and me into the royal office, where the Sultan sat waiting alone. The office was a pleasant, relatively small drawing room, with stained-glass windows and a marble floor. On a gold-leaf table at the Sultan's side was a black cordless telephone. On another table was a photograph of his parents. A Renoir ("Lady at the Piano") and a Gauguin still-life were hanging on the walls. Two glass display cases at opposite ends of the room contained his collection of revolvers, some old, some new. (One of his choice acquisitions, someone had told me, was a nineteenth-century Colt .45.) The Sultan was dressed in a short-sleeved black safari suit and wore a pair of black leather boots. He eyed me, and finally spoke. "Where are your shoes?"

I glanced at Pehin Badaruddin and mumbled something about preferring to be in my stockinged feet, and that it was perfectly all right. All I wanted to do was sit down, because I was feeling a bit faint from all my rushing around. The Sultan had walked across the room to greet me, and now, with a sweep of his hand, he indicated a chair—a Louis XIV, just across from "Lady at the Piano." He sat to my left, in a similar but slightly higher chair, upholstered in red velvet, at the head of the room.

"You understand that this is an audience, not an interview," the Sultan said.

"Yes, Your Majesty," I replied. "But may I ask questions?"

"Yes," he said.

"May I take notes?"

"I would prefer not," he said. "We are merely having a chat."

And so we chatted—about my visit, and about Brunei. He was relaxed and animated as we talked. "I hope you're being well looked after," he said.

I glanced at Pehin Badaruddin.

"Yes, Your Majesty," I said. I realized that my voice held little conviction.

"What's wrong?" the Sultan inquired. "Are you having difficulty with some of your interviews?"

Since I could not tell him that I was having difficulty with *all* my interviews—criticizing the government could appear to be criticizing the King—I said merely, "It would be extremely helpful if I could see someone from the Ministry of Defense."

He responded by nodding his head.

"And, of course, I would like to interview you, Your Majesty," I said.

"I don't give interviews," the Sultan said.

KUALA BELAIT is an expatriates' town on the western coast of Brunei, with sweeping colonial bungalows and gracious lawns; swimming pools and golf courses; and hundreds of "nodding donkeys"—automated oil pumps—dotting the shore. It stretches in an extremely well-ordered fashion along the South China Sea, and has always been more of an oil-company encampment than a Bruneian town. There are many Gurkhas but few mullahs, as far as I could tell. Along with the adjacent town of Seria, it is the center of the kingdom's oil-and-gas industry and the base of Brunei Shell Petroleum (B.S.P.), a joint-ven-

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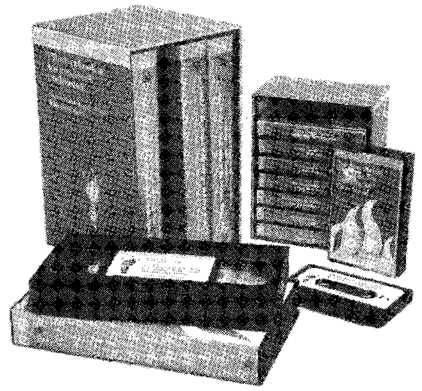

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ture company owned in equal shares by the government and Royal Dutch/Shell. B.S.P. was not without its critics in the royal court. Skepticism about the real value of Shell's contribution to the kingdom was increasingly to be heard. "They have been here for sixty years, but what have they done?" one official said to me. "They have failed to set up oil-related industries and technical schools; they have failed to develop expertise; and there is no technology exchange. Yet Brunei is the jewel in their crown. The income they get from this operation, compared with the investment they've put in, is producing the greatest revenue for the Shell group in the world."

When I called on George Innes, a Scotsman, who is the managing director of B.S.P., and asked him if Brunei *was* the jewel in Shell's crown, he replied that he couldn't really say, since he did not have "direct access" to all of Shell's figures worldwide. The only thing he would say was "There is no doubt that Shell has had unique opportunities in Brunei." (Until very recently, "unique opportunities" translated into "monopoly.")

That was the way that most of my conversations at B.S.P. went. All the officials I spoke with were extremely polite, and gave me cakes and tea. (Nearly all of them were British or Dutch; there were only two Bruneians at the top levels of management.) But when I asked a "sensitive" question they inevitably inquired, "With whom are you meeting next? Ah, yes, better that you pose that question to him." They did tell me that oil output was being held at a hundred and fifty thousand barrels per day, and that Brunei was the world's fourth-largest producer of liquefied natural gas. On the basis of a twenty-year contract, Brunei's annual output, of some five million tons, was exported exclusively to Japan.

Nonetheless, I learned rather a lot during my two-day stay. Expatriates, who, along with Bruneian Chinese, made up some forty per cent of the industry, told me that they were very upset about M.I.B., and that when their contracts expired some of them might well choose to leave. Bruneians told me that they were very upset with the expatriates, since the Bruneians were not being promoted as quickly as they should be. And all of them told me that they were very upset with the Mufti, who had effectively destroyed the Rotary and Lions Clubs after announcing that they were part of "a Zionist conspiracy."

I learned that it was only after fifty-five years that B.S.P. had set up a small refinery for local needs, and then had done so only after the Sultan personally intervened. *He* was very upset a few years ago, I was told, when the kingdom's gas pumps were empty, and the normally docile Bruneians nearly rioted because they couldn't drive their cars. (It had been a "logistical problem," a B.S.P. official explained, and involved getting Brunei's oil back from a refinery in Singapore.) I also learned that the percentage of Brunei's work force that B.S.P. employed had dropped from eight per cent to five over the past few years. I had found even the figure of eight per cent astonishingly low, since B.S.P. was the kingdom's largest employer after the government.

The drop in numbers was largely explained by the loss of skilled Chinese, who had left B.S.P. to emigrate. Brunei's Chinese had been leaving the kingdom in unusually large numbers over the last two years, primarily because obtaining citizenship was becoming increasingly complex. Nearly two-thirds of the Chinese community, or some forty thousand people, were effectively stateless, even though many of them had lived in Brunei for more than twenty years. Most had arrived at the time of British rule, cut their ties with their own countries, and taken up permanent residence. Some had "British protected status," but this meant little when the British left. Since Independence, the court's position on the Chinese has been a particularly delicate one, and the lack of citizenship related to a more fundamental political concern—a policy whose aim was the "Bruneization of Brunei," and that meant filling the kingdom's jobs and positions with Brunei Malays. Consequently, there were no Chinese in the armed forces or the Cabinet, and less than a handful in the upper levels of government. It was thus not surprising that many Chinese, and many Malays as well, saw the citizenship issue as a way of limiting the scope of the Chinese in the kingdom, despite an urgent need for their skills.

Before leaving Kuala Belait, I went in search of Father Cornelius Sim, who is the only Catholic priest left in Brunei. During my stay in the kingdom, its two other priests, Fathers Peter Chiang and John McClorey, and two Catholic sisters had been told to leave. They were all foreigners, but Father Cornelius was a Bruneian—part Dusun (a Borneo tribe) and part Chinese. I had hoped to find him at St. John's Church, one of a cluster of whitewashed buildings with blue trim. Wilted geraniums and other potted plants lined the courtyard. Inside the chapel, parishioners were holding a fifty-hour prayer vigil for the church. Women in simple dresses and men in Western clothes knelt in the pews. On the altar, two white candles were kept burning around the clock.

A young man greeted me grimly and then explained that Father Cornelius was in Bandar conducting services. So I spoke to another church official, who requested anonymity. I began by asking him how serious were the problems the church now faced.

"Well, when you consider that two-thirds of the priests and sisters have been told to leave in one month, I would say that the position of the church is quite precarious. And we have few options," he said. "We've been in touch with the Ministry of Home Affairs, and pleaded with officials to allow Fathers Chiang and McClorey to stay. Some of the officials were quite sympathetic, but one of them said, 'To permit it would be tantamount to pouring gasoline on myself and setting it afire.' " After a brief pause, he added, "What has been implicit for some time has now become explicit with M.I.B." (Since my visit, the situation of the church has not improved, and, in addition, a number of Buddhist temples have been ransacked, closed, or demolished.)

PEHIN DATO HAJJI ABDUL RAHMAN has what is probably the most difficult job in Brunei. As Minister of Industry and Primary Resources, he is charged with expanding the kingdom's fledgling private sector and diversifying its economy. No one was quite certain how small the Chinese-dominated private sector was, since figures were a problem—as figures always were—but everyone assured me that it was *very* small. Of the Brunei work force (which totalled only some eighty thousand), a huge fifty-three per cent was in government service, where there were generous salaries, generous pensions, and generous welfare schemes—and where a great deal of time was spent thinking of ways to encourage others to enter the private sector and diversify the economy.

The private sector was so small that it had only one Brunei Malay lawyer, and he had left the government only recently. Another Brunei Malay professional told me that he had agonized for years about leaving his secure government job before he finally entered the private sector. Once he did, he became a millionaire, but he felt he had suffered a rather substantial loss. "My rank, my prestige—everything evaporated overnight," he said, as we sat in his office one morning sipping cups of tea. "At banquets, I have to sit in the back, where the private sector sits. There's such a clatter from the kitchen I can't hear a word that anyone says. I lost all my parking privileges—the private sector doesn't even have places to park its cars! At His Majesty's birthday celebrations, I no longer have a numbered invitation, and I have to scramble for my seat. And where you sit at the birthday party is where you stand in the hierarchy. As for poor Pehin Rahman, he's getting no coöperation. It's a hopeless task."

A few days later, I called on Pehin Rahman. A forty-eight-year-old Oxford-educated patrician, he had previously served as Minister of Education and as a special adviser to the Sultan at the royal court. A pragmatist in the context of M.I.B., Pehin Rahman was a courtly insider, equally at home with the royal family and the Chinese business community.

He greeted me warmly, but his frustration was apparent when he told me, before I could ask, "You understand that we've been talking about diversifying the economy for many, many years. Even when I was in school, we learned the phrase 'We must all work to diversify the economy.' And in twenty or thirty years our oil reserves will be depleted. But, then again, I've been hearing that same prediction for twenty-five years." He went on, rather more seriously, "We

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simply must diversify, for otherwise the problems could be grave. We have got to create employment for the young—especially the new educated élite returning from abroad. Look at our unemployment figures. We have some five thousand people unemployed, ninety per cent of them young. And there are plenty of jobs around. But Bruneians are simply too choosy about what they'll do. There are certain jobs that locals simply won't take. They prefer sitting at home, or just having a good badminton game. And, with our extended family system, they can afford to do it."

He said that his ministry's priorities were to develop primary industries, such as agriculture, forestry, and fisheries; he also spoke of the possibility of Brunei's becoming a financial center, or a regional service center for banking and trade, adding that the main constraint was the country's scant labor force. The entire kingdom was smaller than an Australian cattle ranch that it owned.

Another court official had told me that enlarging the expatriate work force beyond its present thirty-seven per cent would be "politically unacceptable," so I now asked Pehin Rahman what he thought.

"If you look at it rationally, there may be some logic to that view," he said. "But logic is not the name of the game. If we want to diversify and expand, we've got to have the talent; and we've got to be reasonable about it. Yet every time I suggest a plan someone begins to shriek, 'My God, Rahman wants to bring in more Chinese!' " He went on, "You know, our ministries simply must understand that they have to support each other. One thing we've got to make clear to our ministers and our bureaucrats is that we're all working for the same government."

I asked him what the main aim of economic diversification was.

"The key is employment, and the extent to which we are able to provide employment, so that our population does not become just a group of pensioners," he said. "With our foreign reserves, we can all retire, but we don't want to become a Nauru." He was referring to the phosphate-rich Pacific island where, according to popular myth, no one works and everyone drinks and races motorbikes. "We want to build a nation—a nation that can stand on its own feet."

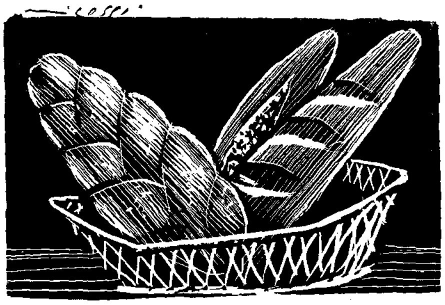
I NEXT called on Pehin Dato Hajji Abdul Aziz, the Minister of Education, who, along with the Mufti, was the key architect of M.I.B. Like nearly all Bruneians, he was an extremely pleasant man, and greeted me cheerfully when I arrived. We chatted about the Gulf War; he was particularly concerned about the Palestinians. A graduate of the University of Birmingham, Pehin Aziz, who is fifty-five, had been the kingdom's acting Chief Minister and had held numerous court posts.

"One thing foreigners don't seem to understand," he began, "is that until very recently we were very, very poor. People planted paddy, and others fished. Then we struck oil, and overnight the sons of hawkers and vegetable sellers became ministers. My own father was a silversmith. He could never have afforded to send me to England, but Sultan Omar knew that our future depended on education, so he sent us all abroad. Everything was at government expense, even the clothes I wore. Most of those now in power had extremely humble origins. Some spend lavishly, of course, but most of us don't. However, I cannot guarantee what will happen with my son. Things can change just like that"—he snapped his fingers.

He went on to talk about the problems with young people. "You've seen the materialism around you," he said. "We've given the new, educated élite all these physical comforts—televisions, VCRs, two cars. One of our dilemmas is how to educate people without turning them into materialists. And that's where Islam comes in. Unlike Christianity, Islam spells out a complete way of life. It can bring the temperature back to normal."

"But what of the non-Muslims in the kingdom?" I asked.

"They need not embrace it—they only need to understand it," he replied. "All this talk of industrialization, diversification, and employment will go on and on. But Islam will come first."



He pressed a buzzer, and a secretary came in carrying a tea service and plates of fruit. I glanced around his office, which was lined with books. He poured the tea himself, then said to me, "When I talk to His Majesty, I refer to myself in the third person; when I talk to a junior, I use another language; and still another for elders. This pride and this hierarchy are what keeps us alive. You may ask, 'Is it necessary for our people to surrender their fate to their king?' This is an established, traditional agreement, and our king is a working king. He has the same executive powers as your President, although he's not selected so often—or, of course, in the same way. Here, although maybe it's not his choice, he is the Sultan, and that is that. In Western eyes, maybe this is not democratic, but for us it's something we must preserve. Why should we look for another system, which might bring in worse political, social, and economic problems? It is best to continue with what is known."

I asked how strong Islamic fundamentalism was in Brunei.

"Pooh-pooh-pooh," Pehin Aziz responded. "You can't find the word in a Bruneian dictionary. Fundamentalism is a Western concept of Islam. For us, you're either a Muslim or a deviationist Muslim. We're part of the Shafiite school, which takes the middle road. In Saudi Arabia, for example, a woman has to cover her whole face; here, she has to cover only her head, and she receives the highest education. Many of my own directors are women. A woman can rise to every level, except a few."

"And what are they?" I inquired.

"Well, she can't become a Sultan, of course, or a judge, or a Cabinet minister. In fact, the rule is really quite simple here—if the position is one in which the final decision is made, it cannot be held by a woman."

If M.I.B. was carried to the extreme, I asked, was there not a danger that Brunei could be turned from a Muslim nation into a theocratic Islamic state, with an Islamic banking system and Shariat laws?

"What's wrong with that?" Pehin

Aziz said. "We will have an Islamic bank, and perhaps an Islamic banking system. And if Shariat law will bring peace and harmony I don't see why it should not be introduced. Why does everyone get so concerned about Shariat? No one cares if a drug offender is sentenced to death. So why should anyone object if, under Shariat law, adultery is punishable by death? If that's a deterrent, I don't see why not."

BRUNEI's Defense Ministry is in the Hassanal Bolkiah Garrison, a complex of unobtrusive, low-slung buildings in a residential neighborhood. It seemed a fitting headquarters for such an unprepossessing force. The armed forces total only forty-two hundred, nearly all of them in the Army; a Navy and an Air Force exist, but their numbers verge on the negligible. However, the three thousand Gurkhas nearly doubled the forces' strength. The Gurkhas are headquartered in Hong Kong, and there was some concern about the future of these soldiers after 1997, when the Crown Colony reverts to Chinese rule. This concern was said to have played a role in Brunei's increasingly close relations with the United States, which include expanded military coöperation between the two countries. With the likely loss of United States bases in the Philippines, Washington was seeking "enhanced security relationships" with other friendly regional states, to gain greater use of their territory by United States warships and planes. The arrangement appeared to serve both Washington and Brunei well. One of the kingdom's paramount concerns was security; it dominated all of Brunei's other domestic and foreign policies. In a sense, it gave rise to the policies of the continuing British link; the ban on politics and the state of emergency; and the extreme importance that Brunei attached to its membership in ASEAN, which, under Prince Mohamed, the pragmatic Minister of Foreign Affairs, had become the cornerstone of the kingdom's foreign policy.

I went to the Defense Ministry one afternoon to meet Major General Pehin Dato Hajji Sulaiman, the Chief of Staff of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces. There were reports of subtle tensions within the armed forces. Some attributed them to M.I.B., others to recent defense purchases, and still others to the fact that relations between the Sultan and his popular Deputy Defense Minister, Major General Pengiran Hajji Ibnu, were strained. The two men had been the closest of friends, and their present falling out was said to have affected Army morale.

General Sulaiman was waiting for me in one of his receiving rooms, and with him was Dato Hajji Mohammad Alimin, a Permanent Secretary of the Defense Ministry. They told me when I arrived that all this was quite unorthodox; Defense Ministry officials did not meet the press. "But His Majesty rang us up personally and said we *had* to meet you," Dato Alimin said.

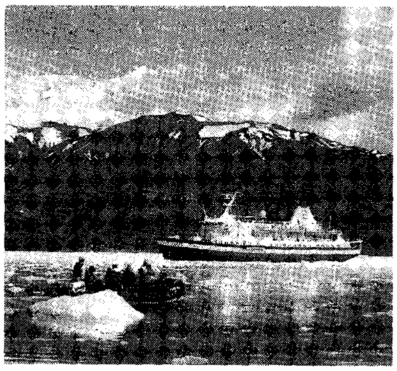
"And he said we had to answer your questions honestly," General Sulaiman added. "I've never given an interview before." A career officer who had just turned fifty, he had trained in Malaysia and Britain, and spoke English with a British accent.

I began by asking the General whether Brunei was Southeast Asia's potential Kuwait, and, if so, who the potential Iraq was. Malaysia? Indonesia?

"You cannot generalize," he said. "Historically, Iraq claimed Kuwait, but Brunei was here many, many years before either Malaysia or Indonesia was. That being said, however, we have learned lessons from the invasion of Kuwait, as we learned lessons during the 1962 revolt. Any neighbor can be a potential enemy, and we cannot choose our neighbors, but we can choose our friends. That is why we attach such importance to our membership in ASEAN, which is rightly evolving into a security entity, offering a balance of force to some degree; it must be added, though, that such a defense arrangement is some distance down the road."

A young captain entered the room with coffee and cakes. As we ate and drank, I asked General Sulaiman what, in his view, were the greatest security threats facing Brunei.

"My own fear is that there could be an escalation of tension in the region, sparked by various claims to boundaries and coral reefs in the South China Sea—the Spratly Islands, for example, where China, Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines"—along with Taiwan and Brunei—"all have claims. And we cannot ignore the Communists as such; Vietnam and Cambodia won't run away." Brunei, I



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knew, had no diplomatic relations with any past or present Communist state, although this may soon change. "And there might be a time when the United States can no longer afford to be here. Then there would be a vacuum, and the possibility that China, Japan, or India could come into the region and throw its weight around."

I observed that a number of foreign diplomats had told me they considered Brunei's greatest potential threat to be internal disturbances, in which an outside power could become involved.

"That cannot be ruled out," General Sulaiman said. "Not if one looks back to the 1962 revolt. And these people are still politically active outside Brunei. Some are in Jakarta, but most of them are in Kuala Lumpur." After a brief pause, he added, "And this is a particularly sore point. We've asked the Malaysians, over and over again, why they do not insist that the Brunei People's Party refrain from political activity. They have granted them political exile, but there are rules. There were conditions attached to their asylum, and we're asking Malaysia to observe those rules."

(I learned later, when I talked to Zaini Hajji Ahmad, one of the leaders of the 1962 revolt, who is now the vice-president of the People's Party, based in Kuala Lumpur, that the Party had recently sent a written appeal to the Sultan, urging him to introduce democratic rule, hold elections, and step down as Chief of Government. "This is all we have ever wanted," Zaini said. "We have always wanted His Majesty to remain as a constitutional monarch; we never wanted to overthrow him. And even now we have not asked that anything be done immediately. We suggested that elections be held three years after political activity was restored.")

I asked General Sulaiman if the People's Party posed a serious security threat.

"No," he said.

"Then why is the state of emergency still in effect?"

"Because of technicalities. There are no serious internal security threats to Brunei. We do not need the emergency law."

I asked the General about attitudes in the Army toward M.I.B.

"There are certain things we have not subscribed to fully in the Islamic musts," he replied. "Our women soldiers are without the *tudong*, and they wear trousers, not skirts. Someone told me that I should put them into those ankle-length skirts; he said that it was according to Islam. And I told him, 'You cannot wear such a thing if you have to run. And, besides, I can find nothing in my Koran which says that women have to cover their ankles.' " He thought for a moment, and then said, "But, if taken to an extreme, M.I.B. could be a very dangerous thing. And the mullahs just cannot say that, because they understand the Koran and Hadith, they are better than others. They've got to understand that we come from a variety of backgrounds, different educations, different lives. This whole thing must be done gradually, if it's to be done. You don't take a bamboo and abruptly bend it into shape. If you do, the bamboo will break."

EARLY one morning, I set out from my hotel to join the Sultan and court officials in Brunei's most remote and inaccessible district, Temburong. The district, like much of the interior, was accessible only by helicopter or boat, and I looked forward to an hour-long river trip through mangrove swamps on what I imagined would be a royal barge.

The hills above the Kampong Ayer were shrouded in mist as our party left Bandar's harbor in a long-tail boat. It was decidedly not a royal barge. It was small, cramped, and dirty, and its Plexiglas windows were stained. It had been rented by the Land Department for the day. A man sat on top of the cabin, giving directions. I guessed he was a navigator, but this gave me only limited confidence.

"It's called a flying coffin," a young man next to me said, with a smile.

I looked around the cabin and counted the people. We were twelve, all élite civil servants except me, clustered together on two wooden benches along the sides. Across the aisle from me were three young women from the Land Department, one wearing red suède pumps. None of them wore *tudongs*. I was rather surprised.

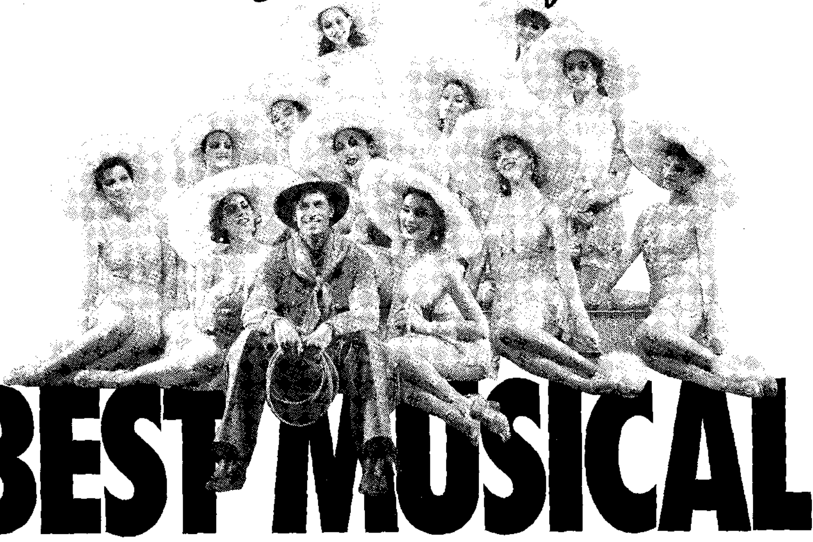
All the men carried smart attaché cases, and some had mobile phones. There was a sense of shared anticipation as we left downtown Bandar behind us and headed east toward Temburong. We passed near the Sultan's palace. A few patrol boats were moored by the shore, but otherwise there was no visible security.

"Our boats are armed with Exocet missiles," the young man next to me said. "Such small boats, and such large missiles." He shook his head. He was an economist in the Ministry of Finance, he said, and had just returned from London. He added that this was his first trip into the hinterland.

As our boat gathered speed, he pointed out the sights. The first notable landmark was the Limbang district of Malaysia, to our right, which had been snatched from the Sultan in 1890, and which Brunei still claimed. It cut Brunei's already tiny kingdom into two noncontiguous halves. I tried to get a good look at it through my dirty window, and wiped the glass with a facial tissue, but my view was still obstructed, by the dangling feet of the navigator, who was shouting directions overhead. I did, however, manage to glimpse an oil rig and a power pylon beyond Limbang's rolling hills, and realized that if Malaysia—the regional power that Brunei most feared, and with which it had the largest number of outstanding disputes—ever wanted to absorb the kingdom, its forces could be here in five minutes in small naval craft.

We skirted Brunei Bay, where Douglas MacArthur had landed in 1945, then reëntered the river, which now ran through rain forest and lush swamplands. The sun seemed to disappear and the sky darkened perceptibly as the river narrowed—in some places to a width of only fifty feet. All around us, the Borneo jungle towered majestically. Its combination of dense tropical foliage, nipa palms and mangrove swamps, tangled roots, mudbanks, and passageways suggested an immense green-brown-and-yellow patchwork quilt. I watched enormous snakes (someone told me they were pythons) slither into the water, and monkeys leap from the trees. The boat sometimes glided and sometimes lurched through the tortuous waterway. We looked out for crocodiles but saw none, to our relief.

The river eventually broadened, and we passed a curious arrangement of bamboo reeds that had been fashioned into crosses, or perhaps votive offerings, on the river's edge. We had entered Iban territory, the young woman in the red pumps said, and she assured me that the tribesmen, the legendary head-



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hunters of Borneo, had been domesticated since the Second World War; their last trophies had been their Japanese occupiers' heads.

Without warning, our flying coffin came to a stop. Looking out the window (we had managed to remove the annoying glass), I saw five distinguished-looking Bruneians, dressed in their best silk *bajus* and velvet Malay caps, adrift in a government speedboat that seemed dangerously close to the waterline. Our group helped them leap aboard our boat, and they told us that they were from the Ministry of Industry and were also en route to Temburong. They had been adrift for more than half an hour, they said, and one man was quite shaken—he didn't know how to swim.

As we approached Temburong's district capital, Bangar, houses on the edge of the water tottered on stilts; many of them seemed little more than tarpaper shacks. A young man next to me leaned over and whispered, "We have no absolute poverty. It's relative poverty."

He told me that he had studied in Cairo at Al Azhar, where increasing numbers of Bruneians now went. These students differed from the kingdom's largely British-educated graduates. The two groups were divided by background and hierarchical rank, by money and prestige, and now, increasingly, by ideology. And there was some concern that this could become a source of potential political and social unrest, with the kingdom's more Islamic have-nots challenging its less Islamic haves.

Bangar spread before us, its harbor filled with boats—speedboats and cruisers, flying coffins and paddleboats. We had no time to admire it, though, because we were already late, and, much to our distress, there were no waiting government cars. It had been a morning of improvisation, so we commandeered a roomy, dilapidated Toyota Land Cruiser. Having picked up a few more visiting government stragglers, we were now twenty-one. An engineer from the Land Department said he would drive, but he didn't know how to reach our destination—a religious school in the village of Bokok, some miles outside town, where the Sultan was inaugurating another government housing scheme. As we sped along the highway, a door flew open; the latch had broken off. We secured it as best we could and resumed our speeding. The young woman in the red pumps pulled a matching *tudong* from her leather bag and demurely covered her head. I glanced at her, and she said simply, "I know. It's such a bore."

As soon as we arrived in Bokok, I went in search of Pehin Badaruddin, but he was comfortably ensconced on the stage with the Sultan and other court officials; and the Sultan had begun to speak. In what was considered an utmost breach of royal protocol, our group nevertheless entered the room, lowering the upper part of our bodies, as Bruneians always do in the presence of elders or one of higher rank; in the presence of the Sultan, we tried to be so unobtrusive that we were nearly on our knees. Only Prince Sufri seemed to notice, and he gave us a broad smile. He had a relaxed, informal manner, which was always a source of great relief.

The Sultan, dressed simply in a pair of black trousers and a black Ralph Lauren shirt, was delivering a *titah*, or royal proclamation, in which he announced a reduced repayment scheme for those who had purchased their homes. He then startled everyone by calling on the authorities to pay serious heed to the "presence of undesirable elements" in Temburong, who were "contradicting the interests of Islam." He warned that Temburong "should not become a district for propagating teachings that did not originate in Brunei."

"He must be talking about the Christian missionaries," one of my companions whispered. "They come across the border from Limbang and Sarawak." I remembered the crosses I had seen along the riverbank, and now glanced at the assemblage of mullahs in the front of the room. They sat beatifically, dressed in long white robes and white prayer caps, and at the mention of "undesirable elements" they all beamed.

I had nearly despaired of ever talking with the Sultan again. After my audience, I had pleaded with Pehin Badaruddin to arrange a second meeting, but he stood firm. "His Majesty meets someone once," he told me, "and that is that."

I had considered my options carefully before setting out on the trip to Temburong. I knew that the Sultan took petitions from his subjects very seriously, so I prepared a

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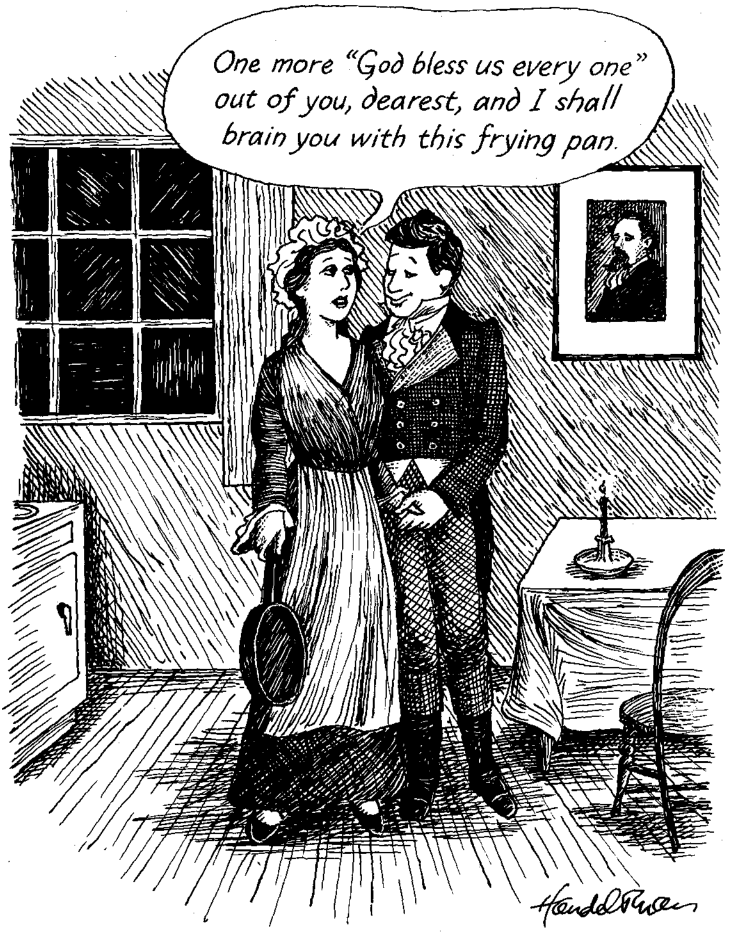
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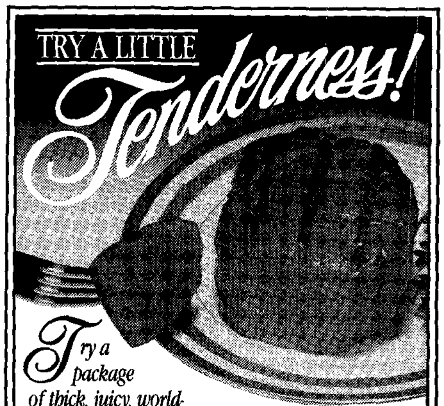

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petition of my own, making my case for an interview. I was determined at the first opportunity to thrust it into the Sultan's hand.

We were outside a classroom of the religious school, and as the Sultan and Prince Sufri chatted with students inside I positioned myself on the veranda, next to the Sultan's A.D.C. He was always in the front row, and was permitted to get closer to the Sultan than anyone else. When the Sultan left the classroom, I was directly in front of the door.

"Are you still here?" he asked me.

"Yes, Your Majesty," I said.

He extended his hand to greet me, and I shoved my envelope into it. There was a gasp of anxiety from the court officials, who were standing behind me in two stiff, immobile lines.

"What's this?" the Sultan asked.

"It's a petition for a meeting," I said.

"But you've already *seen* me."

"It was not quite what I expected," I said.

"All right, I'll read it," he said, and he strode off.

"Well done," Prince Sufri whispered to me as he passed.

"My God, what have you done?" Pehin Badaruddin said.

I reminded him that he had told me he would not impede me if I approached the Sultan directly.

"But, my God, you put it in writing. I know it's a complaint. I shall never recover from this. I shall go into disgrace."

Now, as we bounded across the lawn of the religious school (the Sultan takes considerable strides), I noticed that there was white paint on the back of his black shirt. I pointed it out to a panting court official at my side. "I know," he said. "They painted some of the village last night."

It was a teeny village, even as Bruneian villages go—little more than a few unpaved streets leading to soccer fields and elaborate mosques, which seemed to be the fixtures of village life. I noticed that a group of teachers from the secondary school in Bangar had gathered on the lawn, so I walked over to them and asked them about M.I.B. How had their students reacted to it? There was an embarrassed silence; no one seemed willing to speak.

Finally, a young man answered, speaking rather softly, "They don't like it."

"Why not?" I asked.

"They say they already know it, so why do they have to study it in school?" he replied. "They get no credit for it, yet it's a compulsory text."

Temburong is not only Brunei's most remote district but its least populated one; it has fewer than ten thousand people and twenty times as many trees, and was carved out of the jungle only during the last century. As we left Bokok and drove along Temburong's narrow, twisting roads—with the Sultan, driving his customized Range Rover, in the lead—I watched villagers sifting through mounds of rice, which was newly harvested and piled on woven mats. But except for the rice fields and a few stone quarries there was little here—just jungle-warfare-training bases of Britain and Singapore. As Brunei gained in geopolitical importance, these were being used increasingly by the United States.

During the morning, as we visited schools, health clinics, housing projects, and mosques, subjects constantly came forward to kiss the Sultan's hand. We walked on red carpets, and rested in *chamiana* tents, where we sat on cane furniture, surrounded by standing electric fans. Bearers in livery served us milky tea, curry puffs, and *wajid*, a sweet millet stuffing wrapped in a banana leaf. Police officers stood smartly at attention outside the tents, wearing crisp blue shirts and carrying swagger sticks. We were serenaded by young boys in *bajus*, playing drums and tambourines. At each stop, bearers appeared with cold, wet hand towels, presented to us on small silver trays.

There were opportunities for pleasant, nonpolitical exchanges with the Sultan, but I kept very close to small talk, under the watchful gaze of Pehin Badaruddin, who was never far away. We discussed the heat (Brunei is less than three hundred miles from the equator, and it is always hot), the weather (it was the rainy season, which lasts for six months), and the difference between these houses and the houses we had seen in Tutong. On one occasion, the Sultan didn't seem at all ruffled when I actually spoke first.

THAT evening, Pehin Badaruddin telephoned me at the hotel and said, "Congratulations. Your petition was a success. His Majesty will receive you the day after next."

As I was driven to the palace, I was

accompanied by one of Pehin Badaruddin's aides. The Sultan had been quite distressed, I was told, when he heard that I had been found wandering around in a storage room. But when we reached the palace it was as it had been before: we entered via the underground car park. The only difference was that this time an aide escorted me and we took only one elevator, which was red-carpeted.

Pehin Badaruddin was again waiting for me outside the Sultan's private office. We were ushered in by a bearer in livery, and again the Sultan sat alone.

"Don't take off your shoes," Pehin Badaruddin instructed me quickly, as I began to do so in the entranceway.

The Sultan came forward and greeted me warmly. He smiled as he glanced at my feet. Then he showed me where to sit.

"How long is this going to take?" the Sultan asked.

"How long do I have, Your Majesty?" I asked.

"Ten minutes," he replied.

"But I have twenty-three questions," I said.

He rolled his eyes. "I'll answer fifteen. But you do understand that this is an audience, not an interview."

"Yes, Your Majesty," I said. "But this time I may publish what you say?"

"Yes," he answered. "Isn't that why you're here?"

I began by asking the Sultan about the Gulf War. He believed that United Nations sanctions should have been allowed more time to work, and that peace initiatives should have been given a greater chance. "We have supported all the U.N. resolutions, as you know, but I think that the coalition forces have exceeded their mandate," he said. "U.N. Resolution 678 has nothing to do with the destruction of holy places and homes, hospitals and markets. What we are witnessing is the destruction of an entire country because of this war."

Brunei *had* supported all the U.N. resolutions, I said, yet public opinion was very pro-Saddam. Did that mean that the royal court was out of touch with the public mood?

"Not at all. And the fact that the people are very pro-Saddam proves the point I made to you earlier. Just because we have a state of emergency, it does not inhibit public debate. The people can say, and they do say, what they want. And, as far as the pro-Saddam mood is concerned, look around the region. Every government has issued a statement attempting to cool the public pulse, yet there are still great differences between public opinion and the official positions of governments. So it would appear that all the governments in the region are out of synch with the public mood." He smiled, and added, "So it's not just us." He appeared relaxed and at ease.

"I'm rather confused about M.I.B.," I remarked.

"You've talked to my ministers—all of them, I think," the Sultan said. "They've surely told you where things are headed with M.I.B."

"In two different directions," I replied.

He seemed somewhat startled. "What?" he said.

"I've heard different things from different ministers," I replied.

He looked perturbed, and shook his head. "It's really quite simple," he explained. "We have been exposed to so many outside influences. M.I.B. is an attempt to return to our roots. It is not anti-foreign or anti-Western or anti-Eastern. And I want to make that absolutely clear. We have benefitted a great deal from both the East and the West. We respect your technology and expertise. What we are saying is that we will accept those things which do not conflict with our traditional life. But look at America, for example. You have punk rockers—the Mohawks. And we don't want that here."

"But many people are worried that M.I.B. could be carried to an extreme," I said.

"It won't be," he told me. "I assure you of that."

"Is M.I.B., then, an attempt to checkmate militant Islam, as Zia ul-Haq, for example, attempted to do in Pakistan?" I asked.

"Things are different here from what they are in Pakistan," he said. "M.I.B. is nothing new. We've had it for five hundred years. My ancestors practiced it for centuries. But it is something that people forgot about, and, in the process, they forgot where they came from, and who they were. As far as checkmating militant Islam, I have warned against the dangers of

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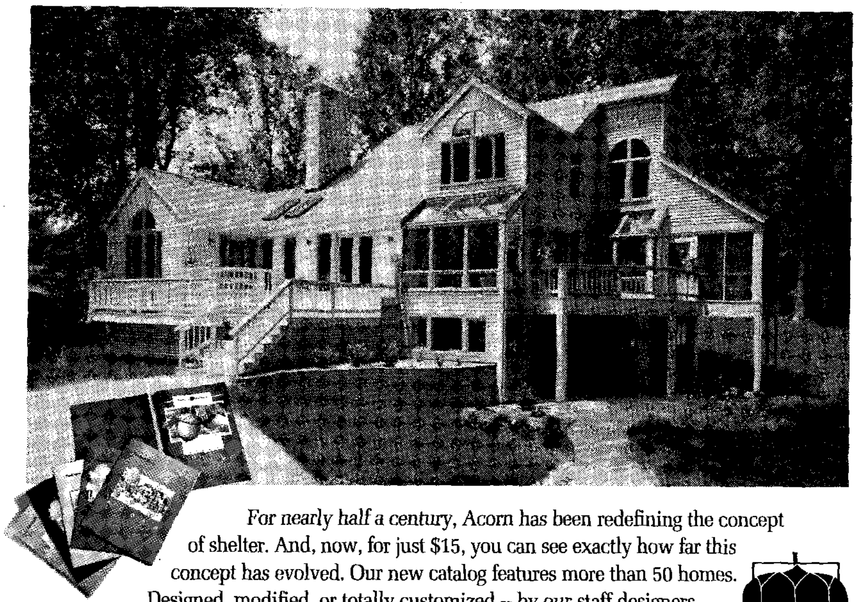

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Islamic fundamentalism many times, and I will repeat the warning now. The main danger of fundamentalism comes when people don't know their religion. They're then susceptible to these clever religious types who want to exploit religion—to use it as a weapon, so to speak. And that is why we have gone straight to the point, and that is religious belief. Some of our neighbors have had problems with fundamentalism, and we are trying to keep it minimal here." He began to speak forcefully. "I will not *permit* extreme religious forces to influence my people." (A few weeks later, the Sultan banned a Malaysian-based fundamentalist group called al-Arqam, which had established a following in the Bandar area, mostly among the young.)

"Brunei has always been known for its religious tolerance—" I began.

"Yes," the Sultan interrupted.

"Then why have so many Buddhist temples been closed, and so many priests and nuns told to leave the country, in the last month alone?"

"You're listening to rumors," he said.

I was now on very delicate ground, since, according to protocol, one was not permitted to contradict the Sultan. Yet one was not permitted to lie to him, either.

"I am not listening to rumors, Your Majesty. I talked to the priests."

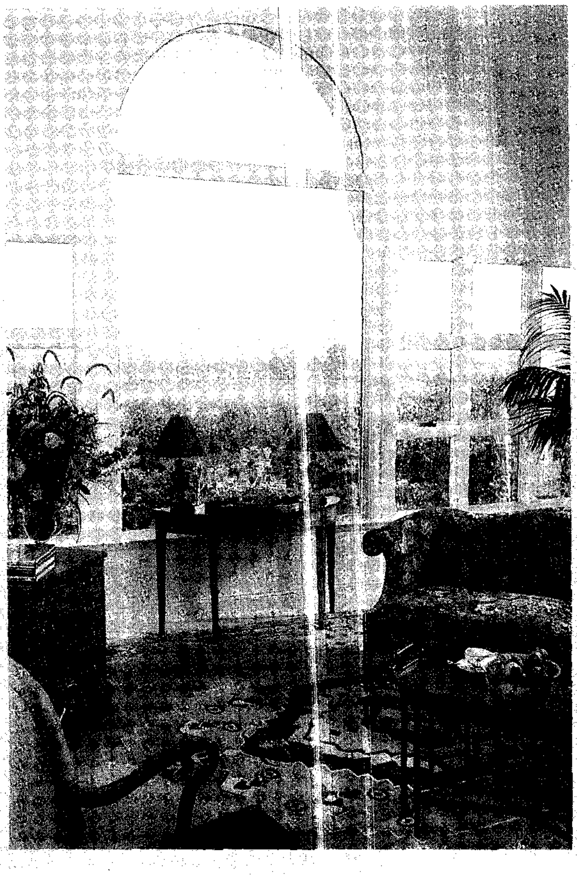
For the only time during my hour-long audience, he seemed annoyed, and said something to Pehin Badaruddin in Malay. I was left with the impression that he genuinely didn't know what was happening to other religions, although it was happening in his name.

"Perhaps the priests' papers were not in order," he said finally. "They *should* have sorted this out with the authorities." He was growing tense.

I remembered something that a foreign ambassador had told me about the Sultan a few weeks before: "He doesn't say much, but you'll know immediately when you've gone too far."

"Should United States forces remain in the region?" I quickly asked.

"Definitely. The American force in the Pacific has been a counterbalance to the Soviet presence in the region, and even though Soviet influence is diminishing now, nonetheless, we support a continuing U.S. role. American forces have been coming to Brunei for some time. There are ship visits,



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joint military exercises, jungle training—that sort of thing. And we receive them happily."

I hesitated for a moment, and the Sultan said, "Have we finished?"

"No, Your Majesty," I replied. "I'm just considering the best way to phrase the next question."

"Why don't you just ask it?" he said.

"Did you give the United States government ten million dollars for the Contras, which Oliver North lost?"

"Why does everyone ask me that question?" he groaned.

"Perhaps because it's interesting?"

"Yes, I gave your government ten million dollars for the Contras, but it was for humanitarian assistance. And, yes, it went missing. It ended up in the wrong Swiss bank account. A Swiss businessman, as I recall. And, yes, I got my money back." He paused. "With interest," he said. "I don't understand all this fuss about the Contras and the missing money. The press has a field day with something like this. Yet did it matter that I gave one million dollars to UNICEF, to look after children? Or half a million dollars to Mayor Koch, to look after the homeless in New York? No one bothered to even report that." He shook his head in frustration, and then he said, "And now I imagine you're going to ask me about Harrods."

"Yes, Your Majesty," I said.

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"I do not own Harrods. I do not want Harrods. If I wanted it, I'd buy it," the Sultan now said. "I had *no* involvement *at all.*" He threw up his

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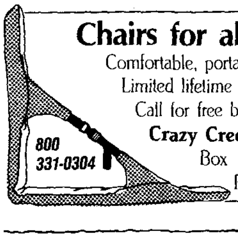

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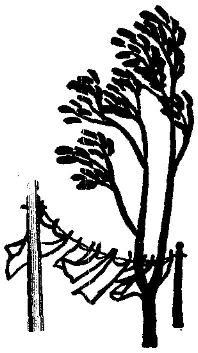
hands. Then he settled himself more comfortably in his red velvet chair.

I asked the Sultan what the greatest challenge now facing Brunei was.

"Finding the proper balance between tradition and modernization," he said. "That is absolutely key. We must strike a balance between the two, and one should not preclude the other, in any sense."

"Does that include political modernization, political reform?" I asked.

"We will proceed cautiously toward political reform, toward more political freedom," he said. "A small country like Brunei, in a region entering a new era of great political change, simply cannot afford internal conflict and political strife."



Many Bruneians suspected that M.I.B. was an attempt to fill a political vacuum and balance the kingdom's latent political forces, which had been held in check by the state of emergency for thirty years. For there were surface indications of political and social unrest, little rumblings here and there. The unrest was being expressed by a rise in drug use and in petty crime, and by a growing frustration with the unchallenging way of life in Brunei. So I asked the Sultan if Brunei's lack of political activity did not create a potentially dangerous vacuum, which other forces could fill.

"Such as?" he responded.

"The Army or the mosque. They are the only two institutions in the kingdom," I said.

"I don't agree," he told me. "We have had other institutions in the past. Before independence, we had a legislative council, and I'm thinking of reviving it. I'm not necessarily talking about general elections, or political parties. But we have to improve the administration that we now have."

"But how are you going to improve it? What are you going to do?" I asked. I knew that I was exceeding the bounds of protocol, and I glanced at Pehin Badaruddin, but he looked unusually relaxed.

"Be specific," the Sultan said. "Ask me a direct question."

I did. I knew that the primary reason the state of emergency was still in effect was that to lift it would mean restoring the constitution, and its provisions for elections and representative government. There had been no political developments since 1962, and the question of whether the Sultan had ideas to move with the times was one that was frequently asked. So far, he had maintained a rigid silence on the subject. I asked him why, after three decades, it was still necessary to have a state of emergency.

"It's really not a state of emergency," he said. "People gather around. They move about freely. You've seen it all over Brunei. It's not martial law, where people can't gather, where their movements are restricted. It's just a safeguard, just a name. It's not really enforced. It's a deterrent, and not a deterrent because we expect a repeat of the 1962 revolt." He fell silent for a moment, as if he were considering his next words carefully, and then went on, "I did not impose the emergency. It was started by my father, who always said, 'Prevention is better than cure.'" Then he said, very deliberately, "But my policy is to lift it, and I will."

Pehin Badaruddin and I exchanged glances. My eyes returned to the Sultan. "When?" I asked.

"Soon," he said.

"So you do have a plan for political reform?" I asked.

He laughed, and replied, "Of course I have a plan, but I won't reveal it now. Why should I announce it in the press? If I did that, there would be no surprise."

When the audience was over, Pehin Badaruddin and I left the Sultan's office together and walked down a long, empty corridor and through open verandas with a cascading waterfall below.

"When are you leaving?" he asked me.

"Tomorrow," I said.

For the first time since I'd known him, Pehin Badaruddin smiled. We went to a reception area outside his office, and I said my goodbyes.

"Let's have a cigarette on it," Pehin Badaruddin said.

I glanced at the Impressionist originals hanging on the wall.

"Is it permitted to smoke here?" I asked.

"Smoke," he replied, and he held out a lighter and lit my cigarette.

—Mary Anne Weaver

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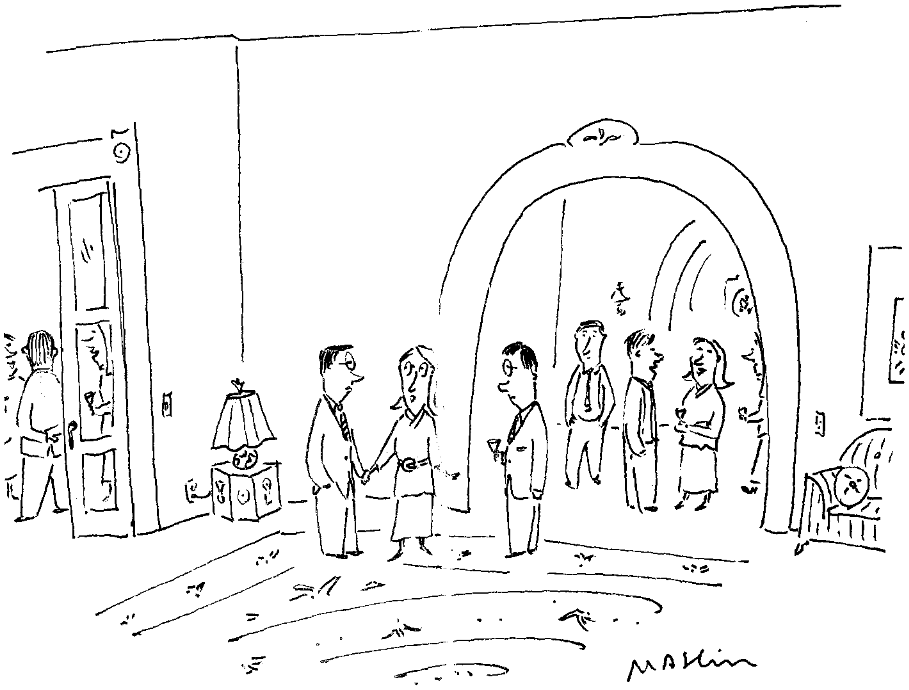
# THE THEATRE

## *Solo*

"FOLKS REMEMBERS A MISSING PAGE," by J. E. Gaines, at the Nat Horne, opens in dim light on a shabby street. A ragged old derelict, a black man, who has been slumped among the garbage cans stands up, stretches, scratches, and tries to find his invisible cat. The derelict is Sonny Jim (Mr. Gaines' alter ego), and as he speaks, it soon becomes clear that here is no run-of-the-mill bum. Self-described as an "anachronism," he is a remarkably eloquent, humorous, and opinionated bum, who unpacks his heart and mind in a monologue addressed to that invisible cat. By description and with light stabs at mimicry, he evokes a whole world and a number of its snappier citizens.

His monologue is about Harlem, mostly before the Second World War (the play is subtitled "The Rise and Fall of Harlem"), and by the time the evening is over, the old man has resurrected his own past and made us welcome there. His mood shifts along with his recollections; he bursts into sobs at the thought of his dead wife, and exults at the thought of Joe Louis K.O.'ing Max Schmeling in less than a round. The names of places and people become talismans along the way. Though many of them are familiar, they never seem stale; the variety of style and emotion keeps them fresh. "Who was the greatest tap dancer?" he asks us. "Bojangles?" He shouts "No!" and then murmurs "Baby Laurence." The Apollo Theatre, Marcus Garvey, the funeral of Florence Mills, the disputes over Islam—Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X—are touched on or discussed, as is integration (bad idea, the bum says) versus segregation (a better one). If all this seems more inventory than review, that's in part because the evening flashes by.

Mr. Gaines comes with excellent credentials. He was a leading dramatist at the late (lamented) New Lafayette Theatre, and a leading performer there and at the Public Theatre and the New Federal. Here he makes his own relish for the Harlem Renaissance into a dramatic event. There is never a tinge of instruction, and he is often very funny. The settings—slides of people and places and events projected onto a small screen upstage—are the effective work of Terry Chandler. The subtle musical accompaniment was designed by Bob La Pierre. No credit is given for costumes, but Mr. Gaines' tattered, raggedy suit is a major find. Andre Mtumi directed. —EDITH OLIVER



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# MUSICAL EVENTS

## *The Imperial Theme*

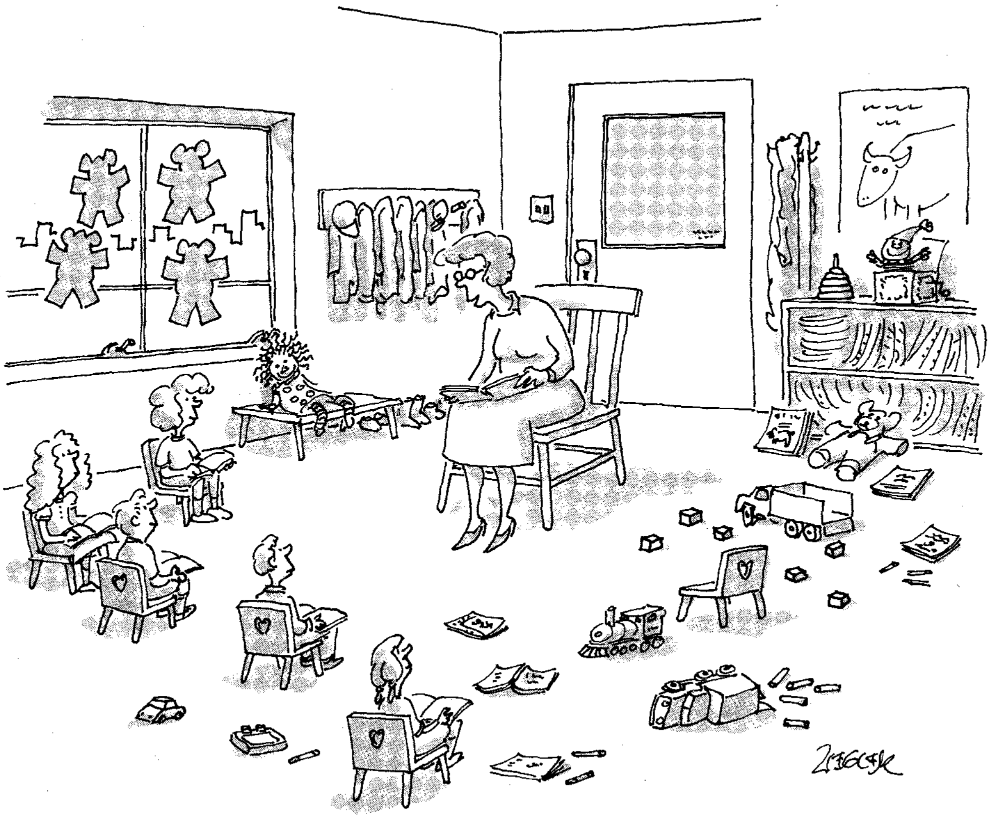
“Le Temple de la Gloire” is not one of Voltaire’s best dramas. He wrote it in 1745, for a fête at Versailles to celebrate the Battle of Fontenoy, in which Marshal Saxe, with Louis XV in person to support him, had defeated the Anglo-Allied Army commanded by the Duke of Cumberland. Two candidates approach the Temple of Glory expecting a welcome but are rejected—Bel for being too bellicose, Bacchus for being merely popular. But the doors of the temple open for Trajan, who shows modesty and magnanimity in victory: having conquered five rebellious kings, he looses their chains and pardons them. After the first performance, we are told, Voltaire murmured anxiously “*Trajan est-il content?*” and Louis, little pleased by a lecture on fitting royal behavior, replied with only an icy stare.

The music is by Rameau, and it is captivating from first to last. After Versailles, the piece was played in Paris, and the next year it was revived there, with the five acts reduced to three and with many revisions: Bel now decides to become more lovable, so as to deserve glory, and the new version—anticipating Messiaen’s arrival at the Opéra by over two centuries—ends with an explosion of birdsong, which led the Parisians to dub its hero Trajan l’Oiseleur. Voltaire’s five-act libretto survives, but the music of only the revision. An abridged recording (with unpleasant instrumental sound) appeared in 1982, and an essay accompanying the set remarked, “It seems highly unlikely that ‘Le Temple de la Gloire’ will ever return to the stage.” But it has returned: last month four performances, the first in America, were given in Florence Gould Hall, by Concert Royal and the New York Baroque Dance Company. James Richman was the conductor, Catherine Turocy the choreographer, and David Ostwald the director.

Mr. Richman and Miss Turocy have been regular champions of Rameau. Over the years, I have written about their work with mixed feelings—gratitude for their advocacy tempered on occasion by dismay at some of the execution. After “Le Temple,” gratitude is dominant. It is no good expecting Arts Florissants fineness, accuracy, and beauty of rendering; the American way of musical life precludes long months of study and careful rehearsal, backed by ample resources. The Gould Hall forces were small: a band of twenty-two, a chorus of fifteen (ten of them stationed in the pit), eight dancers. They were enough to provide delight. Hard work and dedication had produced a performance in which Rameau’s genius was made manifest.

Not all was right. Although there were some eminent players in the band, there were also passages of bleak, scrawny string tone and episodes of out-of-tuneness from which one flinched. Yet one carried away memories of Rameau’s unceasing invention, delicacy, and shapeliness. Three high points, amid so much that was bewitching, were a pastoral sequence in Act I (colored by Wayne Hankin’s musette) whose innocence and charm, so cannily contrived, could melt a heart harder than Bel’s; the voices of the five conquered kings set against choral voices; and, above all, the moments when the final chaconne—obligatory, conventional component of a French eighteenth-century opera’s close—was suddenly interrupted by Glory’s aria, was resumed, was interrupted again by an importunate bird (a solo flute, here Sandra Miller). Torrents of birdsong—trills, isolated calls—ensue, through which Trajan sings the final aria. It may be that the composer was seeking only to capitalize on the hit number, “Rossignols amoureux,” that had followed the chaconne of his “Hippolyte et Aricie.” “Rossignols” is by strictly dramatic canons an intrusion. “It has no place in the story,” says Cuthbert Girdlestone, in his loving Rameau study. But the birdsong finale of “Le Temple de la Gloire” is both stunning and apt. Trajan, the worthy candidate for Glory’s crown, is in tune with Nature; Rameau, Wagner, and Messiaen join hands.

Mr. Richman observed doublings and treblings of role practiced in the composer’s own performances. Christine Brandes, a shepherdess in Act I, Bacchus’ “current beloved” in Act II, Glory herself in Act III, was a soprano bright and definite, who lit the stage when she sang. In the other leading-soprano roles—Bel’s companion,



*“Please turn now to ‘Judy’s mirror’ in your copy of ‘Pat the Bunny.’”*

then Trajan's—Virginia Sublett was agreeably true if less incisive. Susanne Peck, in three smaller roles, had the most clearly projected French of all. (An English translation was on sale, but the houselights were extinguished.) Frederick Urrey sang Apollo and Trajan cleanly, rather blandly. Bacchus is a tenor role written very high, with plentiful C's and D's; Neil Farrell had those notes, sweetly and securely, but his voice flowered only on the heights.

The chorus was assured. Scott Blake—the designer of Washington University's "Orlando," America's first essay in authentic Handel staging—set the action within banks of Vitruvian revolving triangular prisms, each face painted to represent a different scene. The temple portal formed a background. Mary Myers' costumes happily suggested those of Rameau's day. Miss Turocy's choreography was her boldest yet, employing the old, recovered choreographic language with new freedom and fancy—with license, even, in the Bacchic episodes, that would surely not have been countenanced in Versailles. (I do wish, though, that the men of her little troupe would not affect prissy, deadpan expressions.) Dance and music worked well together. Mr. Richman felt the force of all that Rameau was doing. His tempi and his tempo changes were convincing.

AT Pesaro's Rossini Festival this year, other royal occasional pieces were revived, cantatas that Rossini composed in Naples: for Ferdinand IV's sixty-fifth birthday, in 1816; for the King's first visit to the San Carlo, three years later, after his recovery from a serious illness; and for the Emperor Francis of Austria's first visit to the theatre, three months later. (He, it has been suggested, was the prince to whom the precepts of "The Magic Flute" had been addressed.) These Bourbon cantatas were originally grand allegorical affairs, employing the full San Carlo forces: choruses, ballets, transformation scenes, and Isabella Colbran (the King's favorite, later Rossini's wife) as prima donna. An 1819 report tells of a stage band numbering a hundred and twenty. The Pesaro performances, in concert form, were hardly more than sketches; a small chorus (from Prague) and a small band (drawn from the Italian Radio's Turin orchestra) were conducted, with little grace or grandeur, by Gabriele Ferro. Cecilia

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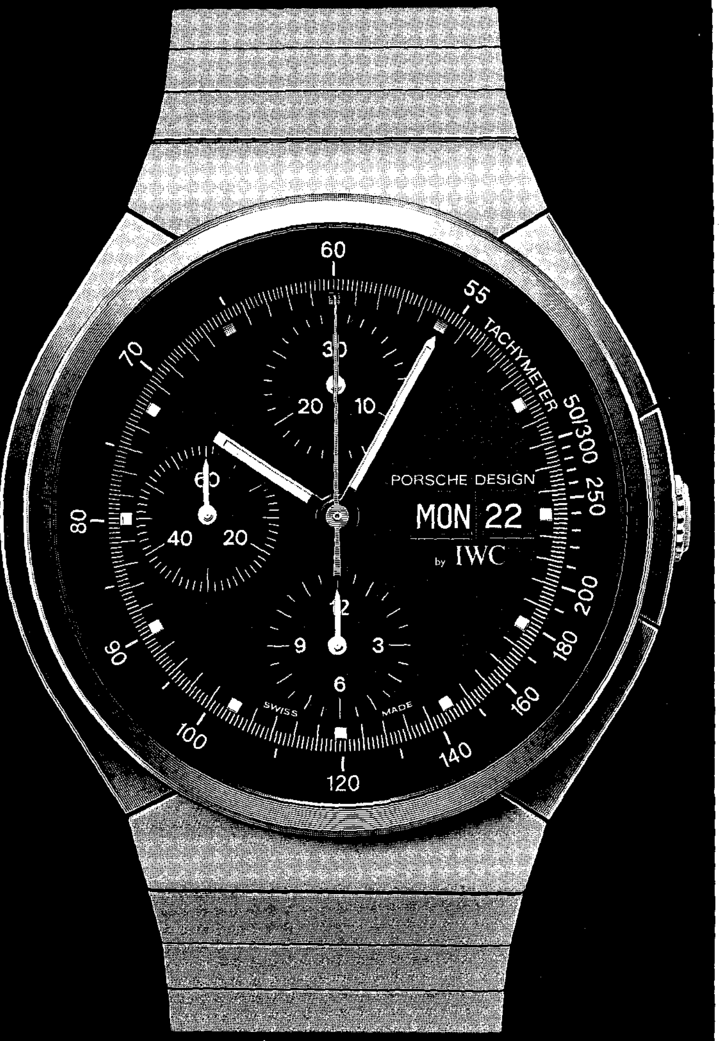

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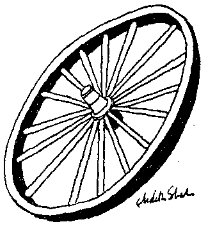
Bartoli, billed for the Colbran solos, was indisposed; three brave but not especially impressive young sopranos took her place, one in each cantata.

The music, despite borrowings from the operas (and some tripping, trivial dance sequences), is not negligible. The birthday cantata, the best of the three, begins with a chorus from "Aureliano in Palmira" (more familiar now as Almaviva's "Ecco ridente" in "Il Barbiere") and continues with an aria for Juno and a cabaletta-with-chorus borrowed from "Torvaldo e Dorliska." The score survives complete, in the New York Public Library; the other cantatas required much reconstruction. Stefano Castelvecchi, the young editor of the Imperial work, amusingly expanded the composer's laconic instruction "the *musica Germanica* here indicated, which Signor Calegari will adapt for the bands." Rossini added an oddly truncated version of the hymn that Haydn had composed for the Emperor Francis twenty years earlier. Mr. Castelvecchi set the cantata words to Haydn's full tune as Rossini scored it, many years later, in the national-anthem sequence of "Il Viaggio a Reims." The Pesaro bill was completed by "Il Pianto d'Armonia sulla Morte di Orfeo," for tenor and male chorus, which Rossini wrote at the Bologna conservatory when he was sixteen. Rockwell Blake, fluent but unengaging of tone, was the soloist. "Il Pianto" is thoroughly composed and carefully scored, an excellent composition; from his earliest years Rossini knew how to write. (Lady Walton in her life of her husband assures us that Walton was not altogether joking when, asked by André Previn whom he considered the finest composer, he answered without hesitation "Rossini.")



Pesaro also revived its 1988 "Otello," restaged "Tancredi," with horses, in the city's sports palace, and mounted a double bill of Mozart's first dramatic score, "Die Schuldigkeit des Ersten Gebots" (composed when he was eleven), and Rossini's first comedy, "La Cambiale di Matrimonio" (composed when he was eighteen). The "Matrimonial Bill of Exchange" was a distressing show. Luigi Squarzina, its director, wrote in the program of "the overturn of one main apparatus of capitalism, namely the relentless system by which a signed piece of paper . . . could decide the destiny of a person." In place of amusing characters, and wit and charm of timbre and utterance, we had non-stop business and busyness, enacted by cartoon-strip figures dressed in loud tartans and forever fussing with props. The London merchant Tobias Mill—the buffo role, the old buffer whom the young lovers outwit—became a stage Jew, a Shylock in yarmulke and tallith. Donato Renzetti conducted a neat but metronomically insistent performance.

Meanwhile, at the Accademia Rossiniana that runs during the festival, Will Crutchfield urged talented young singers to take charge of Rossini's music, to improvise, to do surprising and delightful new things, inspired by text and score, at each successive performance. Pesaro—whose conservatory was established by the provisions of Rossini's will, and whose Rossini Foundation now administers his estate—has in many ways served her native son well. Forgotten operas of merit return to the stage there; famous singers are engaged to bring them to life; accurate texts are put before them and then, in print, before the world. But the staging has often been modish and insensitive: I have yet to hear and see a Pesaro production in which all the exciting new research into matters textual, vocal, instrumental, and scenic finds worthy fulfillment in the theatre.

GLYNDEBOURNE offered an all-Mozart season this year. The festival began, in 1934, with "Figaro" and "Così Fan Tutte." The next year, "Die Entführung" and "Die Zauberflöte" were added, and in 1936 "Don Giovanni." All were conducted by Fritz Busch and directed by Carl Ebert, and when I began going to Glyndebourne, forty years ago, Busch and Ebert were still in charge. There was a distinct company style, in which tradition was sharpened by precision. In the nineteen-seventies, Peter Hall's productions of the da Ponte operas—the "Così" and "Don Giovanni" were conducted by Bernard Haitink—began to establish another, also distinctive way with Mozart, one marked by uncommon freshness, naturalness, and directness. But Sir Bernard and Sir Peter left Glyndebourne, and company policy is now promiscuous. This year, "Figaro" and "Don Giovanni" were based on Hall productions; "The Magic Flute" was directed by Peter Sellars; "Idomeneo" was a revival of a production originally by Trevor Nunn, and "Così" was newly directed by him; "La Clemenza di Tito," being heard at Glyndebourne for the first time, was directed by Nicholas Hytner. Andrew Davis, the company's music director, conducted "Figaro," "Tito," and the "Flute"—stagings in styles so different as to call for protean responsiveness or (what we had) generalized, amiable, alert accompaniment. The other conductors were Simon Rattle, Donald Runnicles (the music director of the San Francisco Opera), and Graeme Jenkins.

W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman in the metalogue of their "Magic Flute" translation, made at the time of the 1956 Mozart bicentenary, wrote:

> A work that lives two hundred years is tough,
> And operas, God knows, must stand enough:
> What greatness made, small vanities abuse.
> What must they not endure?. . .
> Z the Designer
> Who sets the whole thing on an ocean liner.

Maria Bjørnson, the designer of Glyndebourne's new "Così," set the whole thing aboard the S.S. Napoli, an Italian cruise liner, in Edwardian times, while Mr. Rattle conducted the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Peter Sellars chose Los Angeles as the place of "The Magic Flute." I reviewed the production last year and seemed to be one of the few people not outraged by the omission of all the dialogue. This year, some dialogue returned, and the opera was played in a new English translation, by Alice Goodman. Eric Griffiths in that *TLS* essay on Goodman I mentioned last week wrote of it, "Her new lines sparkle and ring true as no text for this music, not even Auden's, has managed to do." He quoted the last couplet of Papageno's entrance song: "We'd sleep together like two spoons, / I'd teach her all the song-birds' tunes." A literal translation would be "She'd sleep at my side, /I'd cradle her like a child." (Auden and Kallman are bumpy here: "When at night she laid herself beside me, I / Would rock her with a lullaby.") The new translation, like the production, was generally derided. Not by me. A "Flute" translator myself, I frowned at some of Goodman's stressing, as in the Three Ladies' "If I should ever give my heart / It would be to this sweet up*start*." Her half rhymes—"dust / best," "freed / sword" in the Ladies' first quatrain—were bothering at points where the music rhymes fully. (I also used "freed" for "*befreit*" but rhymed it with "deed"; Auden and Kallman rhymed "mortal harm" with "woman's arm." "Sword" flashes more brightly than those end consonants; but Mozart's Ladies wield silver javelins, not swords.) In general, I thought this a lively, fascinating version of the ever-challenging text, skillful in its command of tone, arresting in its sudden swerves between the elevated and the demotic, and well matched to the Sellars production. It needs running in—some musical fine-tuning.

The production, which is focused on the enlightenment and redemption of Tamino, a druggy mess at the start of the opera, may not be a "full" or fully satisfying account of the work—few presentations are—but it does offer a truthful, exciting enactment of the principal theme. American singers dominate the Glyndebourne casts: this year's Tamino, Thomas Randle, was a fine actor, but he lacked the musical and vocal charm of last year's, Kurt Streit. (Mr. Streit, my favorite Mozart tenor today, was the captivating Ferrando in "Così.") The weakness of the show is a failure to find a convincing role for Papageno. Emanuel Schikaneder, the first Papageno, commissioned the opera for the theatre he managed, wrote the libretto, and wrote for himself the star role. Mr. Sellars—impatient, he has said, with presentations of the "Flute" as "the Papageno show"—downplayed the character, left the birdman astray in Los Angeles; as a result, he has thrown the drama somewhat out of kilter. Günther Rennert—whose productions of the "Flute" in various cities have punctuated my life—once remarked that every ten years or so a director needs to tackle the "Flute" afresh. I look forward to Mr. Sellars' next encounter with it.

Mr. Hytner is best known in this country for "Miss Saigon." His work in opera houses—"Xerxes" and the "Flute" for the English National, the Opéra and Houston "Giulio Cesare," "King Priam" for Kent Opera (available on video)—has been marked by elegance and intelligence. A recent *Opera* article tells us that many consider him "the richest, most theatrically equipped, and most intellectually wide-ranging British directorial talent of his generation." But his "Tito" for Glyndebourne was disappointing. It seemed to be almost a demonstration of a tendency that he was quoted as deploring: a preoccupation with style, "a few sometimes moderately intellectually based doodles going on at the back of the stage, largely expressed through design, whilst a few people belt it out at the front." The very steep set, by David Fielding, his usual collaborator, was mannered, difficult to negotiate, sometimes didactically adorned. The drama—which was composed for the Prague coronation of Francis's father, Leopold II, and is another exemplar of imperial virtues but one impelled by human plights—remained cold. Ashley Putnam (a sitcom Vitellia, in poor voice), Diana Montague (a forthright Sextus, sometimes harsh but sometimes lovely of tone), and Philip Langridge (an earnest, noble Titus) remained separate, not caught in mutual passions.

To *Opera*, Mr. Hytner said, "I have this terrible feeling that opera's finished. I think we've been doing it wrong—or rather, we did it right, and now it's wrong. . . . Now it's quite simply got as much to do with style and as little to do with content as it was when it was at its most decorative." Sometimes—when Domingarotti manifestations, million-dollar decorative extravaganzas, loving historical re-creations, or quirk shows (this summer in Spoleto I saw Bellini's "Norma" encased in a giant metal artichoke) seem to represent what opera has become—I share Mr. Hytner's "terrible feeling." Then something happens—something like the City Opera's "Moses and Aaron"—to restore belief. Earlier this year, I wrote about the English National Opera's thrilling new production of "Peter Grimes," directed by Tim Albery and conducted by David Atherton. This summer at the E.N.O., their "Billy Budd" was another reassurance that opera in our day can still be alive. Mr. Langridge, the Vere, gave the performance of his life. Peter Coleman-Wright was a bright new Billy. Vocal, instrumental, and scenic elements joined in one adventure.

—ANDREW PORTER

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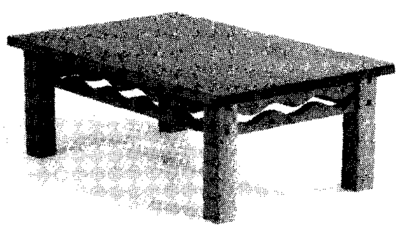

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# THE CURRENT CINEMA

## *Street Theatre*

THE independent filmmaker Gus Van Sant, who works out of Portland, Oregon, is one of the few really original talents to emerge from the bleak landscape of American movies in the eighties. His first feature, "Mala Noche" (1986), was made on a minuscule budget—about twenty-five thousand dollars—and it told a very simple story, about a gay convenience-store clerk's romantic obsession with a Mexican illegal alien, who repels all his advances. "Mala Noche" was, despite its modest scale, a stunning début. Although the fluidity and technical assurance of Van Sant's direction were remarkable, what made the picture particularly exciting was that he appeared to be using his skills in an unusually honest, exploratory way. In every scene you could feel him searching for elusive moods and ambiguous, fleeting emotions; by the end, the characters in this unassuming tale had acquired an unexpected fullness, and the inherent comedy of the smitten clerk's pursuit of his unwilling (and often uncomprehending) beloved became richer and deeper as the movie went along. Van Sant's second picture, "Drugstore Cowboy" (1989), with Matt Dillon as the leader of a ragged group of drug-addicted petty thieves, was even better: a funny and oddly moving low-life picaresque, with a daring mixture of tones and styles. In both pictures, the filmmaker's affection for his down-and-out characters and their mean Northwestern streets was obvious, but he didn't romanticize the people or their milieu. These movies were bracingly clear-eyed, unsentimental. Van Sant didn't condescend to his characters, and he didn't make apologies for them, either. "Mala Noche" and "Drugstore Cowboy" looked at a murky, threatening world with a level gaze, and Van Sant's vision of things as they are had a startling lucidity—a purity that transcended banal naturalism. In these pictures he gave the most abject people and places a kind of integrity; harsh circumstances and desperate needs took on a comic grace.

Van Sant's new movie, "My Own Private Idaho," is his most ambitious work so far. It's set primarily in his familiar territory, the seedier parts of Portland, and its main characters are again social outcasts: a pair of young hustlers, Mike (River Phoenix) and Scott (Keanu Reeves), who sell their bodies on the street. In this picture, though, Van Sant seems determined to go beyond what he has done before, to push everything to the limit. He takes his characters out of Portland: to Seattle, to Italy, and, repeatedly, to the country roads and lonely farmhouses of Idaho, where Mike grew up. The movie also ventures, for the first time in Van Sant's work, into the higher reaches of society—the world of the hustlers' affluent clients and of Scott's father, who is the mayor of Portland. Mike is a narcoleptic, and every time he blacks out we are taken directly into the troubled boy's imagination, with lyrical dream sequences composed of imagery from his childhood: salmon leaping in a stream, fast-moving clouds in vast Western skies, jerky home-movie flashes of Mike as a toddler, with his smiling mother. And the character of Scott has an explicitly mythic resonance. He is modelled on Shakespeare's Prince Hal, who spent his youth carousing with the fat old knight Jack Falstaff before succeeding to the throne. The Falstaff character here is a scruffy gay cokehead called Bob (William Richert), and his scenes with Scott are stylized variations on incidents from both parts of "Henry IV" (hence also variations on Orson Welles' great film treatment of the Falstaff-Hal story, "Chimes at Midnight"). For long stretches, Scott and Bob and Bob's entourage of street kids bellow and trade japes in grandiloquent Shakespearean style; the dialogue in these scenes is an amalgam of Shakespeare's language and contemporary slang, and there is vaguely Elizabethan music playing in the background. Like Prince Hal (who, of course, became Henry V, the hero of Agincourt), Scott holds himself slightly aloof from the low company he keeps: he's marking time until the moment when he can assume his rightful place in society and startle everyone with his conversion to sobriety and respectability. You can't help admiring the chances that Van Sant takes in "My Own Private Idaho." It's clear that he means to expand on the discoveries of his earlier films, to enlarge their small truths into something universal: his third movie is like an exploded version of his previous two, and it scatters meanings all over the landscape. It's a beautiful disaster, like a bomb

test out in the middle of nowhere.

Visually, the movie is so imaginative, so fiercely alive, that it carries us along. Van Sant's filmmaking style is intimate and persuasive: even when an individual sequence doesn't seem to be working, we never fully give up hope that the movie will somehow bring everything together in the end, reveal even the most puzzling bits as indispensable elements of a vision. But after the picture is over and the spell of Van Sant's strong voice is broken, we feel a peculiar emptiness: as Bob Dylan sang in one of the stark ballads of "John Wesley Harding," "nothing is revealed." For all the technical adventurousness of "My Own Private Idaho," the film lacks the emotional complexity of "Mala Noche" and "Drugstore Cowboy," and it's surprisingly humorless. When the overall design of the picture finally becomes clear, we feel cheated rather than enlightened. Van Sant's Prince Hal turns his back, literally, on Bob and everything the old rascal represents—drugs, crime, poverty, homosexuality, and the community of the dispossessed—and his renunciation of his former life style is presented as an act of sheer villainy. It makes us realize (if we hadn't done so already) that there's something glib and imprecise about Van Sant's appropriation of Shakespearean motifs in "My Own Private Idaho": it's facile to equate the Prince's anguished awareness that he will someday have to assume the responsibilities of a king with Scott's cold-blooded desire to transform himself into a pillar of Portland society. (He isn't going to *inherit* the title of mayor.) Scott's duplicity kills Bob, and it leaves sleepy Mike (who is in love with Scott) alone in the world, a waif lying on desolate roads and dreaming of love, eternal friendship, and the serene wholeness of nature. Van Sant's vision turns out to be schematic, unshaded. The tough-mindedness of the two preceding pictures seems to have dissipated into a haze of sentimentality about street life. Through Scott's betrayal, Bob is ennobled as a dying symbol of outlaw freedom, and Mike takes on the aura of a holy fool, the Prince Myshkin of the Portland meat market. And as these shining figures come to the fore the realities of homelessness and prostitution recede into the background, becoming more and more out of focus, until, finally, they're just a seductive blur to set off the spiritual allure of Mike and Bob.

"My Own Private Idaho" isn't conceived realistically; it's not meant to be a journalistic report on young gay hustlers in the Pacific Northwest. The problem with Van Sant's approach isn't that he deviates from an accepted view of this life as dangerous and degrading but that his poetic distortions are in the service of a trite and rather dilettantish vision. He presents the hustlers' values as somehow freer and more honest than the hypocritical mores of bourgeois society, and, while that's more generous than denouncing the kids as beastly degenerates or using their adventures to produce tabloidy shock, it's still reductive: the movie seems to be getting vicarious intellectual thrills from the hustlers' way of life. The evidence of "Mala Noche" and "Drugstore Cowboy" suggests that Van Sant doesn't really mean to exploit this milieu, and the movie's first half hour—before Bob makes his entrance and the "Chimes at Midnight" associations kick in—is full of the sort of brisk, evocative, and mercilessly exact observation that made the earlier movies so exhilarating. "My Own Private Idaho" is the first film in which Van Sant's screenplay hasn't been based on another writer's material, and in the absence of the formal limits imposed by an existing story and cast of characters he seems to have lost control of his meanings. In attempting to give some structure to all the volatile emotions and disparate experiences he wants to capture in this picture, he has forced his drifting, suggestively muddled characters into too narrow a frame. They keep trying to burst out; the rigid structure keeps tightening around them; and finally everything goes to pieces.

The heart of "My Own Private Idaho" is the character of Mike. After the movie has ended, you're tempted to close your eyes and reimagine the whole experience, selectively (as Mike does in his narcoleptic dreams)—to cut out the ill-conceived plot line of Scott's treachery and thus allow yourself to be moved by Mike's story without feeling coerced. What most of the audience will probably remember of this movie is River Phoenix, who gives a superbly intelligent and intuitive performance. Although the script ends up begging

"One does not remain a puritan for long in the old French Quarter of New Orleans."

–*Tennessee Williams*

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for sympathy for Mike, Phoenix never does. He's completely and unselfconsciously absorbed in Mike, and he's genuinely touching: when the young hustler wakes from one of his dream visions, we feel as though we could see the afterimages lingering on his clouded face. Van Sant has stranded the actor in a movie full of flat characters and bad ideas, but Phoenix walks through the picture, down road after road after road, as if he were surrounded by glorious phantoms.

VERY entertaining ghosts populate the imagination of Trudy, the crazy bag lady in whose head the action of "The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe" takes place. Trudy pushes her shopping cart through the streets of New York and provides a kind of welcome wagon for visiting extraterrestrials. Her task, as she sees it, is to show them the variety of life on Earth, and she feels uniquely equipped for the job: her umbrella hat picks up signals from everywhere. She's a living TV set, with lots of channels and great reception. Trudy is played by Lily Tomlin, and every person whose life flashes onto Trudy's psychic screen is played by Lily Tomlin, too. No matter how fast the umbrella-hat apparatus switches from one life to another, Tomlin gives us a clear, sharp picture every time: she's a high-definition actress.

This astonishing one-woman show was written for Tomlin by her longtime collaborator Jane Wagner. It was presented on Broadway in 1985 and then toured the country for a while; the published text of the play, illustrated with photographs of the star in her many incarnations, was a best-seller. By now, hundreds of thousands of people must have seen or read "The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe," and it has been around almost long enough to be considered a classic, so there's no need for me to go on and on about Tomlin's acting genius, or about the ingenious construction and compassionate wit of the material that Wagner has written for her. It should be enough to say that this belated film version, directed by John Bailey, mostly does justice to the extraordinary talents of these women. The play has been "opened out" a bit for the movie. Tomlin sometimes appears in costume as her characters, and on full sets, and these elaborations aren't really necessary: her voice and her gestures are all we ever need to tell us who the character is. Bailey uses a kind of strobe-light flashing, with fast cutting, to indicate when Trudy is picking up a fresh signal and Tomlin is going to take on a new character, and that effect is a little distracting. But nothing interferes with the dazzling rhythm of Tomlin's performance, and the piece is constructed so that its themes build up an inexorable momentum. The characters who flicker across the screen turn out, in the end, to be connected to each other in ways we couldn't have anticipated. And it's immensely gratifying to see all the different personalities gathered together in one woman. "The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe" is probably the only solo theatrical performance that truly deserves to be called democratic.

—TERRENCE RAFFERTY

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# A REPORTER AT LARGE

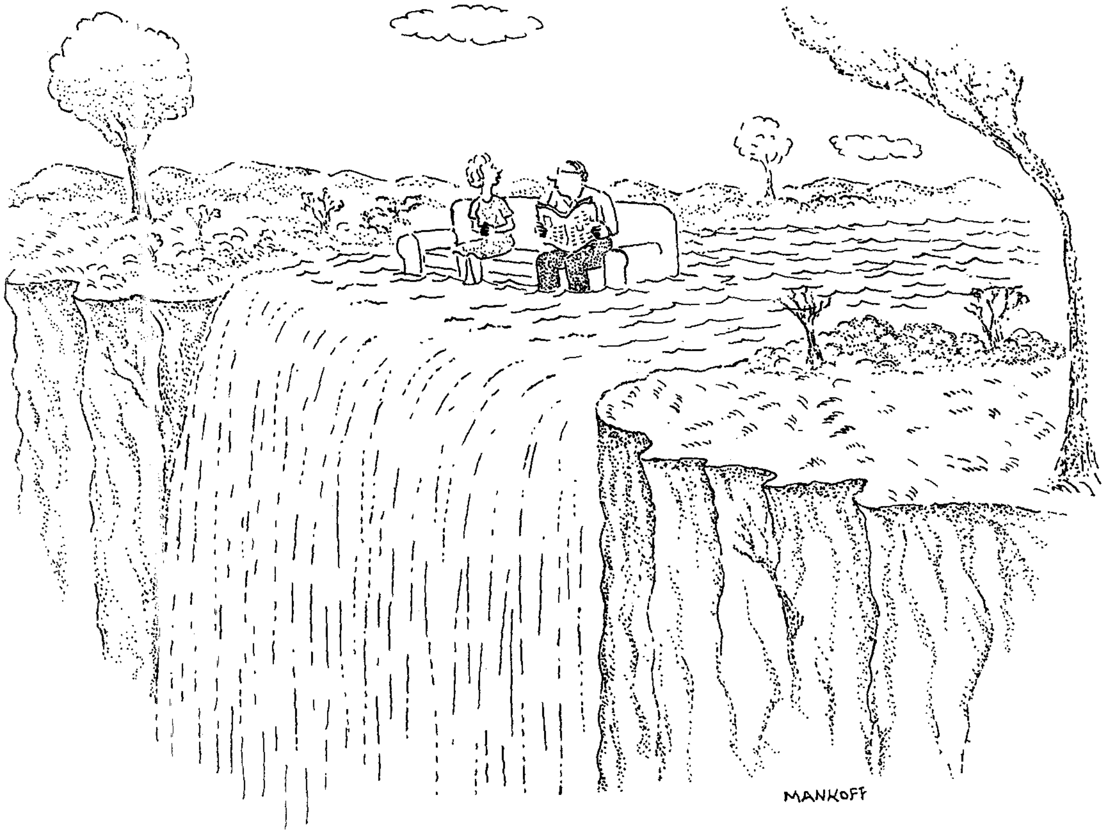
## LADYBUGS

THE ladybugs were late coming into the Sierra Nevada this year. They usually begin clustering in big aggregations up there by the end of May, but this year they weren't seen until a couple of weeks later. They had hatched in the early springtime, as usual, down in California's Central Valley, and—in larval form, looking like miniature alligators—had fed on aphids in the field crops there. Stuffed with those agricultural pests, the larvae had spent about a week in quiet as pupae, rearranging their body parts before emerging as the cheerful-looking orange, black-spotted beetles that everybody loves. The adults come out of their pupal cases hungry, but as larvae they have disposed of the available aphids so thoroughly that there is little left for them to eat. So they take wing and, riding the thermal currents created as the sun heats up the valley, fly to the mountains, where they feed on pollen from the flowers blooming there. After a week or so, they settle down in masses of thousands and thousands, under leaf litter and in protected places near streams, to last out the summer dry spell. In the autumn, rains rouse them briefly, and they find protected sunny spots higher up in the canyons, away from floods, and then enter a period of dormancy. In midwinter, they become active again, seeking one another out to mate, and on some mild day they fly back down to the Central Valley, where they feed on aphids, lay eggs, and die—those, that is, who have escaped the semiannual ladybug harvests in the Sierras.

There are many species of ladybug in the United States, and almost all of them are good at eating small, soft-bodied plant pests. The commonest of the species is *Hippodamia convergens*, the one collected in the Sierras. *H. convergens* is found wild everywhere in the country, but only in the prolonged dry spells of the Western mountains does the species form aggregations big enough to be harvested economically. Mail-order companies do a brisk business selling these beetles to gardeners across the country, who order them in the hope of ridding their vegetable patches of aphids and other soft-bodied insects.

"We are having a real problem," Jeanne Houston said when I telephoned her last May to ask if I might come to the spring harvest. Jeanne manages Unique Insect Control, a beneficial-insect company owned by her and her parents, Peter and Mary Foley, who claim to be the largest ladybug suppliers in the business. "The orders keep coming in, and I've been trying to talk our customers into using green lacewings instead," she said. (Green lacewings, common insects of several species in the genus *Chrysopa*, are found across the country in the wild. About half an inch long, they have four pale-green wings and bright, prominent eyes. They are also known as aphid lions, being ferocious feeders on aphids, and insectaries sell them in egg form.) "But people just insist on ladybugs, and they aren't up in the mountains yet; the weather hasn't warmed up enough to drive them out of the valley fields. We do stock them in refrigeration, so we can sell them to commercial greenhouses year-round, but demand is up, and we are completely out of ladybugs."

The use of ladybugs in pest control is about a hundred years old—at least, in California. In the early eighteen-seventies, the cottony-cushion-scale insect was accidentally imported into the state from Australia and spread rapidly and disastrously throughout the citrus groves. In 1888, the scale's natural predator—*Rodalia cardinalis*, the Vedalia ladybug—was imported by orchardists and entomologists, and it quickly brought the scale under control. Significant populations of Vedalia thrived, and they continue to protect California citrus crops. Impressed by this success, California entomologists began to take a look at the native ladybug, *H. convergens*. They knew that it fed



*"Brad, we've got to talk."*

on aphids and other insect pests in both its larval and its adult form, and they realized that it could be collected easily when it massed in the Sierras. So in the early years of this century the State of California began a program to harvest its own ladybugs.

The old-time ladybug harvesters used mules to haul loads of beetles out of the mountains. In Sacramento, the beetles were packed, crated, and shipped to growers around the state. The results were disappointing. It didn't take long to discover that nearly all the ladybugs released in the fields flew away. By the nineteen-twenties, scientific studies had determined that although the ladybugs were important agricultural helpers in their natural setting, the shipped ones did not act as a significant control on pests, and the State of California got out of the business. But ladybugs, perhaps in part because they are so appealing, became something of a symbol to the American gardener, and with the growth of the organic-gardening movement there arose a demand for them countrywide—a demand that, according to the Foleys, is still growing and brings in from three million to five million dollars annually, with ladybugs outselling more effective predators like green lacewings.

Ladybug harvesters are people who, for one reason or another, like to be paid in cash. Good harvesters can make a thousand dollars a day and, perhaps understandably, they tend to be a secretive lot, protective of their particular harvesting locations, their techniques, their skills, and their knowledge of the rough terrain up in the mountains, where gold used to be mined in equally covert fashion. Before getting in touch with Jeanne Houston, I had been given the name of a woman in her sixties who harvests ladybugs for another mail-order company, but I discovered that she had recently been involved in a dispute over ladybug beds—as the aggregation sites are called—which had ended in gunfire. A family of harvesters had been collecting in a bed that the woman considered her own. She discovered them and cussed them out, and as soon as she left gunshots were fired from behind a nearby hill; the bullets ripped through the family's camp, punching holes in their pickup and their Ford Bronco. The family accused her of hiring someone to shoot at them. She admitted to a reporter that a gun had been fired, but she indignantly denied hiring a gunman. "If I was going to shoot somebody, I wouldn't send somebody else to do it—I'd do it myself," she said, adding, "I didn't even have a gun with me that day."

I decided that I didn't want to go ladybug harvesting with a person who every now and then carries a gun, so I asked Jeanne Houston if she could arrange for me to go out with one of the pickers (as she called the harvesters) for Unique Insect Control, once the weather warmed up. She was not optimistic about finding me a suitable—or willing—picker, but after a week or so she called to tell me that Mike Lake, a construction supervisor in Sacramento who has been picking ladybugs for ten years, had agreed to let me go out with him. "He's our most reliable picker," she said, emphasizing "reliable" as if it were a code word for "respectable."

I telephoned Mike, and he firmly corrected me on the use of the term "picking" in reference to the harvest. "We call it bugging," he said. Those who go bugging, I later learned, are called buggers. I promised Mike that I would keep the location of his beds a secret—he has discovered at least a hundred of them over the years—and I also promised not to reveal the intricacies of his method of harvesting, which involves a water technique he learned as an apprentice to the second generation of a family of buggers. These secrets shall not pass my lips.

Mike Lake is a stocky young man with dark hair, and on the day in late June when we go out he is clad in white shorts, white T-shirt, and running shoes. He grew up in Nevada City, California, on the western slope of the Sierras, surrounded by the canyons where the ladybugs bed down. He has a college background in forestry, and he knows the mountains the way only a native can. He is also an avid hang glider, and uses his flights to spot likely ladybug beds and the access roads to them. Mike works both of the harvest periods—the spring one and a winter one, which takes place whenever the snows permit the buggers to get up into the hills before the ladybugs fly back to the Central Valley.

We start out from Sacramento at eight in the morning, in Mike's four-wheel-drive pickup, which is loaded

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down with ladybug gear and a trail bike, and drive up to a nearby town to rendezvous with Lowel Ruoff, his apprentice. “Lo's retired,” Mike tells me. “He was going crazy for something to do, so I took him on. But I really like working alone better. I can go faster and make more money. Lo is pretty laid-back. Sometimes he even takes a nap in the woods when he's bugging. But I was trained by guys who needed the money, and I like to work quickly.”

Lo Ruoff lives in a California sort of house in the Sierra foothills, with a view looking out over Lake Folsom. And he's a California sort of guy—slim, with a beard starting to turn gray, and dressed in a red sweatshirt, jeans, and Birkenstocks. He offers me a cup of South American bark tea. “Doesn't taste like anything, but it's good against what ails you,” he says. He shows me a storeroom for ladybugs which he has carved out of a wall of rock in back of his garage. “This rock's lava cap,” he says as we enter the cool gray cave. “I just took a jackhammer to it. Carried out eight, ten loads of rubble a day for six weeks before I had it big enough.” He has jackhammered out rock ledges, on which he has stacked six-foot-wide chicken-wire trays to hold his sacks of ladybugs before he takes them down to the Foleys for processing. A couple of cloth sacks containing his haul from yesterday, when he went bugging alone, lie on the trays. Lo has a four-wheel-drive pickup, too, with his trail bike already loaded into it; we'll need the bikes to get into at least one of the ladybug beds. We arrange to meet at the first bed, and Mike and I drive into the hills.

On the way, Mike points out a faded sign reading “Ladybug Road,” and a ramshackle house beside it, which was home to the first man to buy ladybugs from people in the mountains. Peeling off the blacktop up in fir country, he steers his way down a rutted dirt road full of potholes and washouts. At last, we stop in a grove of madrona, fir, and spruce trees, next to a fast-running creek, and wait a few minutes for Lo. While we are waiting, Mike cuts some fir boughs with his pocketknife and piles them next to the truck. When Lo drives up, we unload Mike's secret water equipment, a pile of cotton flour sacks, bungee cords, a thirty-gallon blue plastic tub, and two five-gallon-can rims with hardware cloth wired into them. These last are

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sieves for separating the ladybugs from the leaf litter; they look like the pans the old gold miners used for placer mining. We scoop up the boughs and the gear and edge our way across the stream on a partly submerged log. Not far from the creek, Mike stops and throws down his load. "There," he says, pointing to the ground under a cottonwood tree. "Ladybugs."

I see nothing but leaves. However, this is one of Mike's bugging beds, a spot to which ladybugs return each year, generation after generation. The leaf litter, he tells me, is sheltering ladybugs—thousands of them—and after the water equipment is activated the little beetles begin to climb out, turning the leaves orange with their numbers. Mike and Lo turn off the water and spread the fir boughs on top of the ladybugs, who climb onto them because they are dry. When the boughs are covered, the two men shake them over the big blue plastic tub, and the beetles fall in. Mike looks up at me and laughs. "Yeah, you gotta have a Ph.D. to run these boughs," he says. Quickly, before the beetles escape over the rim of the tub, Mike and Lo dump handfuls of them onto the sieves, which they have lashed to the mouths of two of the sacks with bungee cords, and begin swirling and shaking the beetles down through the hardware cloth while bits of twigs and other debris remain on top.

I ask if I can try it. Mike hands me his bag and scoops up a handful of ladybugs for me. I swirl and shake, and watch them fall through the screen; the motion, which looks so simple in expert hands, turns out to be tricky. Lo watches me. "I got tendinitis last year, until I got the knack of it," he says.

"Sometimes we shake out scorpions," Mike tells me. "Scorpions like the same sorts of places ladybugs do. So do brown recluse spiders and black widows. I've even found rattlesnakes in ladybug beds." He apparently doesn't count poison-oak rash, with which his legs and arms are covered, as one of the occupation's hazards. He brushed up against some poison oak last weekend, when he was out bugging for the first time this season, and the reason he is wearing shorts today is to relieve the itching. He grins, and says, "But the biggest hazard is wandering into someone's pot field. You don't want to do that."

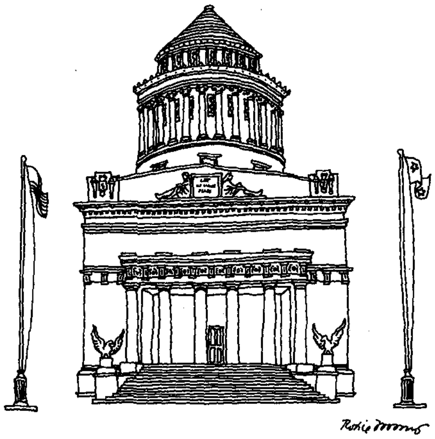
This bed turns out to be less thickly populated than Mike hoped it would be. He estimates that at most he takes somewhat better than half the ladybugs from any given bed, and he's disappointed that this one has yielded only a few sackfuls. We pack up, edge across the fallen log, and load the sacks onto chicken-wire shelves in the back of Mike's pickup. Mike spreads out the sacks, distributing the ladybugs as evenly as he can over the chicken wire, so that they won't overheat, and we shift into four-wheel drive and bump down an even worse road to get to Mike's next bed. It, too, is on the far side of a stream, but this time there is no easy way across. The water is racing and waist deep. Once we get to the other side, we find fresh-cut boughs strewn about, indicating that someone else was bugging here recently. Mike collects half a sackful of beetles, and wades back across the river, holding them above his head. We drive deeper into backcountry, into the old gold-mining hills.

At a sunny pulloff near one of the forks of the Yuba River, we unload the pair of trail bikes along with the gear. Mike drives his truck up the road into shade, for the comfort of the ladybugs in the sacks, and Lo follows to give him a ride back. I stand watch over the bikes and the gear: the mysterious water equipment, the blue plastic tub, the bungees, the sieves, the flour sacks. Three men carrying fishing poles walk with their dog up a path by the river toward a battered old pickup; they stop to look at me and the equipment.

"Going mining down there?" one of them, a man with a gray stubble of beard, asks.

"Nope," I reply.

"That's funny," one of his companions says, lifting his cap to scratch his head. "Most folks going down that way go mining. If they ain't going fishing. And it appears you ain't going fishing."



"No," I say. "Not mining, not fishing. That's a nice dog you got there."

We talk dogs until Mike and Lo return, park Lo's pickup, and leap out. We load up the trail bikes. I'm going to ride behind Mike, so he makes a seat for me out of flour sacks. We stuff everything else into the blue plastic tub and load it on Lo's bike, to the considerable interest of the fishermen. After the load is secure, Lo, an environmentally concerned man, who does not like to cut fresh boughs at each bed, reaches into the back of his truck and gathers up an armload of fir boughs, and bungees them on top of the rest of the gear. The fishermen exchange glances. I climb onto Mike's trail bike and cling to his waist as we drive along a rocky path beside the Yuba. Here and there are tents. Aging refugees from the Woodstock nation still live in these California hills, some of them, Mike tells me over his shoulder, staying through the winter. "I know those people," he says. "Talk to 'em sometimes. There's miners here, too."

When we get to our destination, near a creek branch, we scramble down a hillside to the bed. Mike's face falls. A big swath has been cut in the shrubby deciduous growth, and a fir tree stands mutilated, all its smaller branches ripped off. Someone has taken ladybugs here. "Well, there's a lot left," Mike says. "This is a big bed. He didn't work the hill a little higher up." The whole bed is perhaps fifty feet square, and even I can see beetles, gleaming orange, crawling here and there, hinting at the numbers tucked into the leaf litter.

A heavyset man with a beard the color and texture of corn silk wanders up from a tent nearby. "Any of those little fellers left?" he asks Mike, whose buddy he appears to be. "Another guy was here two—no, three—days ago."

Mike asks him what the guy looked like, and when he is told he and Lo look at each other and nod. "I knew it was him," Mike says. "This is the way he works. I hate to see such a mess made of a place. People who like the environment are pushing ladybugs, and so far they haven't got us for disturbing the beds. This will all grow back, so it doesn't hurt much in the long run, but it's not the way I like to see a place left."

Mike and Lo settle down to business, and soon there are what appear to be thirty-seven zillion ladybugs spread across the hillside. The men are shaking them down into the sacks quickly, before the bugs can take wing, which they are likely to do as the sun, shining through the canopy of leaves overhead, warms the air. A red admiral butterfly, its black hind wings edged in orange, flutters in and out of the sunbeams, a variation on the day's theme. I soon notice the distinctive odor of ladybugs: a musty fragrance, something like wet earth and leaves but more than that—pungent, ancient. There are ladybugs everywhere. Climbing a gnarly moss-covered oak, dotting it with flashes of orange. On the green boughs. Every stalk of grass is studded with them. They are crawling up the inside of my jeans, creeping across my midriff, tickling my neck, nipping, ever so lightly, my arms.

Beetles are the most numerous order in the animal kingdom. Some three hundred and seventy thousand species have been named, and some experts speculate that millions more remain to be discovered. Enveloped in the scent and feel of ladybugs, I remember the great British biologist J.B.S. Haldane, who, when asked what he had learned about the nature of the Creator, replied, "God has an inordinate fondness for beetles."

Before long, the sun will disappear from this canyon: the afternoon, at least here, is ending. Even though I have not been working as hard as the two men, I'm weary. I find a stone to sit on, and watch them climbing up and down the slope, shaking ladybugs from the boughs into the plastic tub and sifting them into the sacks. Sacks are lining up on the ground. Five . . . six . . . seven, each with several gallons of beetles in them. The sweat streams from Mike's face. Lo climbs the hill to the rock where I am sitting.

"You know, sometimes I feel like I'm losing power," he says. "And I think maybe the ladybugs are getting me."

"Yeah, I know," I reply. "Ever since I turned fifty, I've been losing power steadily."

"I'm pushing sixty," Lo says.

"So am I," I tell him, and we look each other in the eye and smile. We both know about losing power and that the ladybugs have nothing to do with it.

Mike is still a young horse, however, and even when the sun has disappeared behind the ridge he is reluctant to quit until he has every last harvestable ladybug in his bag. But by a quarter to six there is a chill in the air, in the shade of the canyon evening. We have filled nine sacks, and Mike calls it a day. We pack the gear on the trail bikes. Lacking the mules of the old days, the men tie the sacks together in two bundles, and I help them drape the bundles around their necks after they are on their bikes. I climb on behind Mike, and we make our way up the trail to the pickup. It's nearly dark by the time we get back to Lo's garage, where, using a one-gallon scoop, we portion out the ladybugs into cloth bags. Our harvest for the day totals thirty-one gallons. At an estimated seventy-five thousand ladybugs to a gallon, the haul amounts to two million three hundred and twenty-five thousand beetles. The Foleys pay Mike well, and he has occasionally made a thousand dollars a day bugging, but today he will fall well short of that.

UNIQUE INSECT CONTROL'S processing building is behind the Foleys' house, in a tidy, middle-class neighborhood of well-tended houses in Citrus Heights, a Sacramento suburb. Their van doesn't fit in the garage in front of their house because the space for it has been taken over by stacks of chicken-wire ladybug trays and a big walk-in refrigerator. Ladybugs that can't be held there are taken in the van to a cold-storage warehouse, some fifteen miles distant.

Peter Foley, a white-haired man with glasses and an outgoing manner, retired from his job as a chain-saw salesman ten years ago, when he and Mary bought the business. They had hoped that it would provide them with employment a couple of days a week. "But now," says Mary, a comfortable, motherly-looking woman, laughing, "we work at least ten days a week on it." Jeanne, their daughter, has had business-school training and is crisp, positive, efficient. Blond, with hazel eyes, she says "Exactly!" often enough to inspire confidence. No one in the family has an entomological background; they have picked up their knowledge on the job.

In the Foleys' processing plant, the beetles are dumped in ten-gallon lots into a plastic tub with a chalk line on the inside. The chalk line is the beetle

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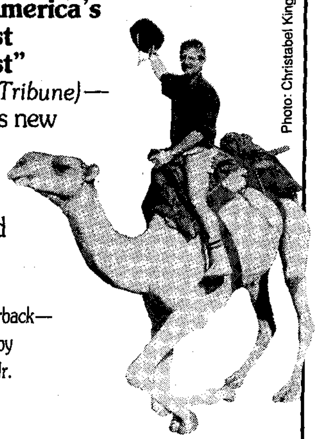

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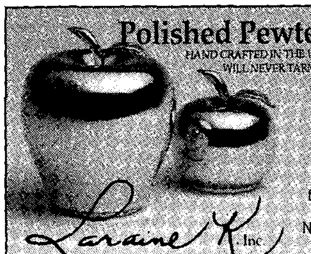

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version of a cattle guard: the chalk granules are so slippery that the beetles can't crawl across it. Instead, they sit quietly in their tub and await being scooped out in measured amounts (the company sells in lots ranging from half a pint to a gallon) by Pete and, today, also by Marie Duncan, a part-time assistant. The beetles are poured into tight-weave cotton sacks, which contain wood shavings for them to crawl on, and passed along to Jeanne, who packs them into cartons that have been folded by her maternal grandmother, who lives with the Foleys. Jeanne also inserts an information sheet, which says that ladybugs are the most popular and well known of the beneficial insects but makes no claims for their effectiveness, and tapes or staples the cartons closed, and Mary addresses the cartons. Today they are filling orders for Burpee customers. The Foleys receive orders from sixty seed and garden-supply companies in addition to orders from their own direct customers, and they also sell wholesale to a number of other ladybug suppliers. On a normal day, they ship between six hundred and seven hundred orders; on a busy one, they may send out three or four times that number. They all take turns answering the telephone, and today it is ringing continually, because the New York *Times* has just published a gardening story about beneficial insects and has listed Unique Insect Control as a supplier.

"When we bought this company, our sales were only about thirty-five thousand dollars annually," Jeanne says. "The first year, we lost money. The second year, we broke even. The third year, we showed a profit. And the business has been expanding ever since."

The processing room is a cheerful place, well lighted, well laid out, its walls painted white. Marie, who has two young children, has left them at home today with her mother, but sometimes she brings them to work. Jeanne's nephew, a toddler named Cameron, is busily pushing a plastic wheelbarrow around the workroom. Marie laughs as he rolls it across her foot. "Sometimes we call this place Foleys' Bugs and Babies," she tells me. The work will go on into the evening, and when they finish packing orders they will load the van and take them to Sacramento's twenty-four-hour post office, to be shipped to customers across the country.

Although ladybugs make up most of the company's business, it supplies lacewings and other garden predators, too: nematodes (a species of worm), earthworms, fly parasites, Trichogramma wasps. Jeanne shows me a clutch of praying-mantis egg cases in the refrigerator. "Now, we don't make any claims at all for these," she says. "But people want them. We sell fifty thousand a year." She shows me a packet of nematodes and says that they are a new product for the company.

I ask her how they select a new item, and whether they keep track of its effectiveness.

"Well, we get lots of letters back from customers, but we don't do any testing, or anything like that," she tells me. "We'll try something that sounds interesting, and if we get reorders we'll continue it. I even tried gardening gloves once. We sell what people want. And people seem to want ladybugs."

DR. KENNETH HAGEN, a tall, mild-mannered entomologist in his early seventies, works in the Division of Biological Control in the Department of Entomology of the University of California at Berkeley. Although he has studied a variety of insects, Dr. Hagen—or Ken, as, in California fashion, he invited me to call him—is the acknowledged authority on *H. convergens;* while I was reading up on ladybugs I frequently saw his work referred to, and his papers have been published in journals here and abroad. In the scientific world he is Mr. Ladybug, and he takes a dim view of ladybug harvesting. A few days after my trip with Mike Lake and Lo Ruoff, I visit him in the division's laboratory building, a one-story putty-colored stucco structure on the woodsy grounds of Berkeley's Agricultural Experiment Station, near the Berkeley campus. Ken's office, which is cluttered with books and filing cabinets, adjoins a laboratory, where he shows me vials of lady beetles—as he prefers to call them—in all their instars, or development stages, under a microscope. He also pulls out trays of a synthetic lady-beetle feed that he and his researchers are in the process of formulating. ("So far we're still missing the mysterious Vitamin X that will meet their needs.") He puts another vial under the microscope and invites me to look. It is *Perilitus coccinellae*, a small wasp that parasitizes lady beetles, adversely affecting their feeding, mating, and flight ability. He and his researchers have discovered that approximately ten per cent of the beetles that overwinter in the Sierras contain such parasites. Infested beetles are less likely to fly, he tells me, and, once put out by gardeners, are more likely to stay near the release spot, fooling whoever bought them into thinking that he has a population of hardworking, aphid-eating lady beetles on hand. They will feed but will not reproduce, and shipping them serves only to spread the parasites. Healthy winter-collected beetles, unless they are released into a greenhouse or some other enclosed space, will usually fly away—particularly if the temperature of their new environment is 65° F. or higher—because they are starved from their hibernation; they are ready to eat and they invariably fly off before they do so. As Ken puts it, "Fly first, eat later."

I ask what will happen to the beetles I watched Mike and Lo collect, which are probably on their way to a gardener as Ken and I talk.

Beetles collected in the late spring or early summer behave quite differently, he tells me. Aroused from their slumber, they usually do not disperse over any great distance, because they are in a resting stage and are plump with stored fat from feeding on mountain pollens. They will probably fly up briefly at the new site, gather again, and settle down in some covered spot, but they will not eat great numbers of insect pests. Eventually, of course, their at stores will be gone and, if aphids are present, they will eat them and ay eggs.

*H. convergens*, Ken tells me, is found ll over the country, though elsewhere n the continent the species' rhythms re different, for the rains in many laces continue through the spring, ummer, and autumn. In other parts f the continent, there are aphids enough nd the beetles do not go through a ormancy period in the summer but ontinue to feed on aphids until late in e season, before bedding down at the pproach of winter. They have no eed to make long flights, such as the estern *H. convergens* do from the hot elds to the cool mountains, for they ave a steadier food supply. The long ights and the summer dormancy in ggregations, which makes them easy harvest, Ken explains, are an adap-

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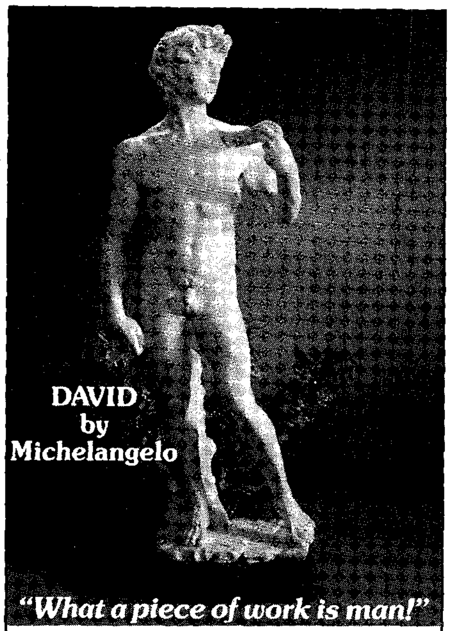

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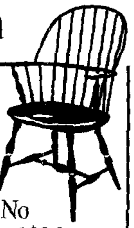

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tive response of the beetles to western weather conditions. Individual lady beetles may eat as many as five thousand aphids in their lifetime and are effective predators when allowed to experience their natural life cycle in their natural surroundings, but Ken regards *H. convergens*, gathered from aggregations in the Sierras, as ineffectual predators. "Green lacewings are a better bet," he says. "They're generalists—they'll eat everything a lady beetle does, and more pest species as well."

Ken and his colleagues worry that too many lady beetles are being collected in the Sierras. "Of course, in some years there are actually too many lady beetles, and they crowd their own food supply, so it doesn't hurt to collect them," he says. "But in other years I'm not sure what the long-term effect may be of taking so many beetles from their habitat." Generations of beetles fly back and forth from their own particular sites in the Central Valley and the mountains, he explains, and harvesting them in great numbers from certain accessible beds may create "shadows" in the valley fields—places to which few lady beetles return. Growers may need to resort to insecticides to kill the aphids that the beetles would have eaten, he says.

Ken and his colleagues are working on what he refers to as classic biological control: in order to avoid misuse and overuse of pesticides, they study a pest species that has been accidentally introduced into an area and try to match it with its natural enemies from its place of origin, as was done so successfully with the Vedalia. There is another species of lady beetle—*Cryptolaemus montrouzieri*, the mealybug destroyer—which insectaries are now raising on mealybug-infested potato sprouts. It is a very good predator and is commercially available, but its usefulness is limited because it only eats mealybugs. Insectaries could also raise *H. convergens* if researchers could develop a food for them.

I tell Ken and his researchers about a commercial supplier of lady beetles whose methods were described to me by Jeanne Houston: this man packs handfuls of the beetles into little coarse-mesh bags and sells them from racks in hardware stores and similar retail outlets. The floor underneath the racks is usually black with tiny specks, and the customers, if they notice the specks at all, probably don't know that these are the lower parts of the beetles' legs, which catch in the mesh and tear loose. When those crippled beetles left alive are released, they can no longer crawl, much less hunt aphids. Mike Lake had told me that he, too, knew about this supplier, and refused to sell to him.

The researchers shake their heads sadly. One says that he was talking to a California fruit grower recently who routinely orders large quantities of lady beetles. "I tried to tell him that he was simply throwing his money away," he says. "But he claimed that he had a surefire method: he put them in a big black plastic garbage bag and laid it out in the sun until the lady beetles got really hot. He said it made them so mad that when they flew out they'd attack just about anything."

Ken is dismayed. He is a man who has spent a good part of his academic lifetime studying *H. convergens* and trying to explain its biology and behavior to the public. "But you just can't say a word against ladybugs," he remarks, with a sigh.

THE truth is that people *like* ladybugs, and there are few other insects that they do. Ladybugs look as if they were designed by a children's-book illustrator, and they make us smile. The Foleys have started selling them to schools and community groups, to be released instead of helium balloons on Earth Day or other Green occasions. One species of ladybug, *Coccinella novemnotata*, is the official New York State insect. The ladybug is a design motif in toys, clothing, jewelry, pottery. Our relationship with the little beetle is a long and affectionate one. Ladybug. Lady beetle. Ladybird. *Bête de la Vierge*. *Marienkäfer*. In many languages, it is the Lady's (the Virgin Mary's) animal, and European folklore has it that if you harm a ladybug the Virgin will punish you for nine days.

Ladybird, ladybird,
Fly away home,
Your house is on fire
And your children all gone;
All except one
And that's little Anne
And she has crept under
The warming pan.

Of all the puzzling rhymes in Mother Goose, this is one of the darkest and most peculiar. What is the meaning o the house on fire? And who is Anne Is she St. Anne, the mother of th

Virgin Mary? She also shows up in a German rhyme about another kind of beetle. Translated, it reads: "Goldchafer, fly to your high fir tree. Fly to your mother Anne, who will give you cheese and bread. It is better than bitter death." And, also in German, there is a ladybug rhyme similar to ours, and similarly ominous: "*Marienkäfer*, fly away. Your little house is burning. Your little mother is crying, and your father sits on the doorstep. Fly away to Heaven, away from Hell."

There is a theory in German folkloric scholarship that the ladybug rhymes may have their origin in beliefs about the scarab, the sacred beetle of Egypt, whose name is derived from the same root as the word "become" and was associated with the fiery orange of the sun. Iona and Peter Opie, the scholars of the nursery rhyme, explain that, according to this theory, the rhyme may be "a charm to speed the sun across the dangers of sunset, the house on fire symbolizing the red evening sky." Others have suggested that the old rhyme referred to the burning of the hop vines in England to clear the fields, a practice that killed many ladybugs. The Opies also point out that a good way to rid oneself of witches is o tell them that their house is on fire and yet, since the ladybug is so universally linked with good luck and happiness (many allusions concern orthcoming wedding days), the Opies are reluctant to regard the pretty little beetles as witches' familiars. In the end, they are as puzzled about the rhyme as anyone else, and they can only conclude that it is "undoubtedly a relic of something once possessed of an awful significance."

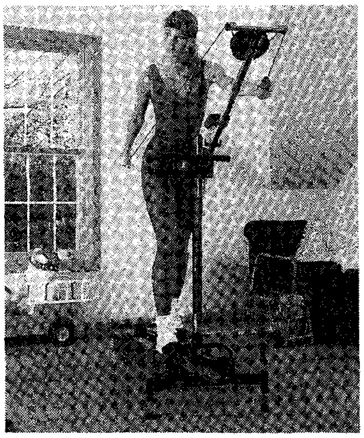
A waitress in a Sacramento restauant who served me a meal one day while I was there asked what I was doing in town. I told her I was taking n the ladybug harvest up in the mounains. "Oooh! Ladybugs!" she said, her ace opening up in a smile. "I just love eeing 'em in my garden. What are hey supposed to do, anyway?"

—SUE HUBBELL

•

Glenn Shaw was misquoted in last week's Gazette as saying "You have rules and reguations that would make a barbershop smile" while testifying to the Sequim City Council. His words were ". . .would make Gorbachev mile."—*Sequim* (*Wash.*) *Gazette.*

We like the first version better.



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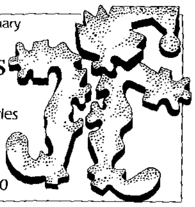

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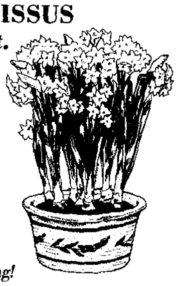

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# BOOKS

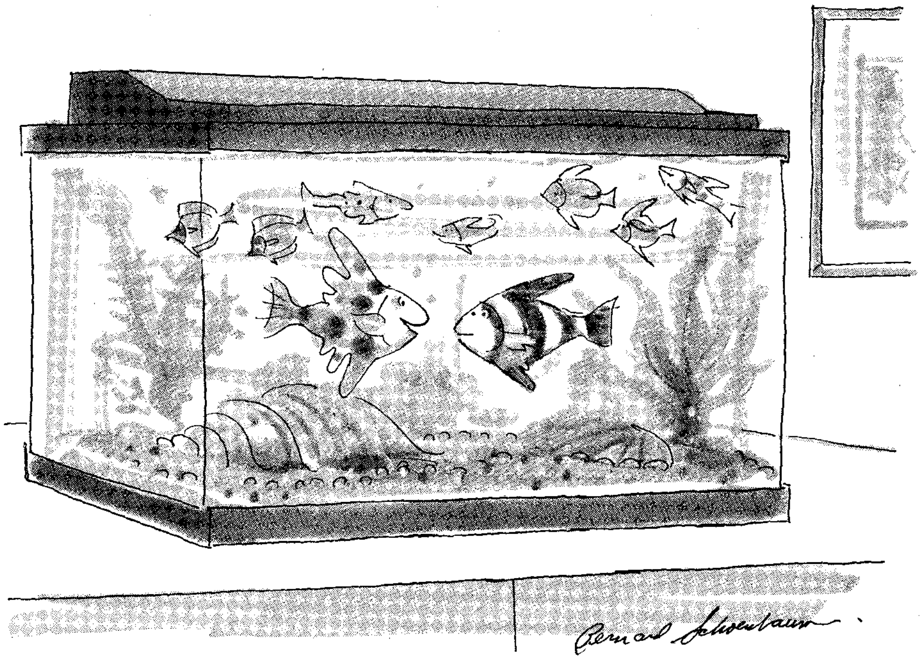
## *Words and Music*

A French child deserted by his mother can hardly bear to look at the sea near his summer home, so painful is the association of *mer* and *mère*, "ocean" and "mother." A German musician brought up to revile his language dreams of a stream and recognizes the translated image of Bach, whose name means "stream," calling to him in the forbidden tongue. We assimilate the world by language, pumping it full of our pleasures and pain, and are in turn subject to its rebounding life, its affinities and subversions. In Pascal Quignard's novel "The Salon in Württemberg" (translated from the French by Barbara Bray; Grove Weidenfeld; $21.95), the French child and the German musician are one and the same, and it is among the diverse accomplishments of this brilliant and rapturous book, which became a critically anointed best-seller on its publication in France, in 1986, that the reader comes not only to understand but to feel the force of one of Quignard's central concerns: "Beings call out through things. . . . Every language transfigures every world."

The words that touch us most may be our own names. Quignard's hero and narrator is Charles Chenogne: the name shushes. This effect is pointed out at first meeting by one Florent Seinecé, a fellow-soldier in the postwar French Army, whose own name, in fact—as Charles retaliates—whistles. In fast friendship, these two young men of exquisitely pitched hearing and generally heightened sensibility make a buoyant and courtly pair. Charles is a specialist in Baroque music—he plays the cello and the viola da gamba—and an authority on nursery songs. ("How marvelous!" Seinecé says after hearing him sing "Pimpanole, Once Long Ago" complete. "A civilized man at last.") A natural lyric comedian, Charles presides over the book like Watteau's famous Gilles standing high and solitary above his fellow-players, somewhat rueful, his silk trousers slightly too short and his social instincts questionable. Musing on the various ruses by which people attract one another, and on the question of his own personal charms, Charles concludes, "Trying to make other people like me would involve ridiculous efforts to derive some sort of appeal from my own awkwardness or at least using it to evoke sympathy and pity. . . . But that strategy's not even worthy of an infant in the cradle: it's more the role of a bulb in a pot or a tub of chrysanthemums in a graveyard."

It is Seinecé who is the greater innocent, bound even more tightly than Charles to childhood's consolations. Married and the father of a three-year-old daughter, a professional archivist trained at Chartres, Seinecé is a man with habits as fastidious and as elegant as rites: "My life is a tiny civilization. And a very frail one." A collector of bookends, of learned periodicals, of pebbles, and of spirit lamps, Seinecé is, above all, a connoisseur of candies. Magnificat caramels and Dutch Hopjes and yellow bergamots (once called mother's kisses) with a tang of pear, and Neguses in hard-toffee varnish, and the fruit jellies encased in "saris of crystallized sugar" which are known as *Lolottes de Nevers*—all are savored by Seinecé and enumerated, even elucidated, by Charles, the way categories of botany or viniculture or metaphysics might be, the friends attuned to every genus and strain of their particular variety of pleasure. "What attracted me about them," Charles recalls, of his falling in with his companion's fascination with sweets, "was the notion of putting several layers of sugar around a center—around truth, or despair, or desire, or sin." But Charles has always disliked the attendant rustling of paper, and, in any case, he prefers cakes: "They don't conceal any secret."

Seinecé was a child left alone too many evenings without his mother, with a night-light and some candies. (Perhaps there are things better left unexplained.) He has known the same sufferings as Charles in a lesser form, without the component of linguistic anguish. Seinecé is purely and comfortably French, while Charles has been cut adrift from the idea of motherland, and as for the phrase "mother tongue," he says: "It fills me with dread. My mother never bent over my pillow. I've almost no idea what her voice sounded like." At his childhood home, in the town of Bergheim, in the Swabian province of Württemberg—an area around Stuttgart with strong French as well as Germanic roots—Charles was, and is, Karl. His family who had been church organists in the old town for three hundred years, had sold everything and resettled in Franc when Württemberg joined the new German empire in 1871. They re



*"I'd love to chat, but it's one of those 'get things done' days."*

turned only with de-Nazification and his father's guilt at shedding "family" blood while fighting in the Resistance. In Bergheim, Charles grew up on German—learning to read from the Baron Münchhausen adventures—and spoke with caution the French that his mother, who spoke nothing else, demanded; the German cook warned that the sound of it would keep the dough from rising, and his schoolmates tended to look upon him as an occupying soldier. Despite his father's claim that their land belonged culturally to France, not to Germany ("Never trust countries that haven't had a Renaissance or classical period!"), his mother hated the town, hated even the language. And so, as a result, did Karl. On Sunday evenings, he and his four sisters would proceed to the music room and desperately saw out quintets for the approval of their mother, who sat impassively paging through a magazine, beneath a large academic oil of Psyche illuminating Eros under her dangerous lamp—or, as the subject of the painting suggests itself to Charles years later, "Psyche forever burning Love." Like Eros, his mother fled; she returned to France, alone, in the middle of his childhood.

The drama that shapes Quignard's novel is tragically simple: the betrayed child finds Eden and loses it by his own act of betrayal. Eden is Saint-Germain-en-Laye in the nineteen-sixties, when Charles visits Seinecé every evening in the pink-walled studio where the archivist sits among his ordered books and colored pencils like a monk poring over manuscripts, and where Charles discovers the balm of spiritual affinity. But as Seinecé becomes the great friend of Charles's life, so Seinecé's beautiful wife, Isabelle—called simply Ibelle—becomes Charles's great love. In a sunstruck delirium of grass and gushing water, when a summer in Provence has turned Ibelle's skin "the color of German bass viols, dyed with Cassel clay and roucou," she reaches out to Charles. He runs at first—literally, all the way to town—but soon relents. Their passion is fervent and brief—a few months, a few pages—and it leaves all life divided into before and after. When Charles was a child, his father took him to see "the lantern of Judas," in Magdeburg; betrayal is the hidden hinge of his existence. The scene of the revelation to Seinecé—or of Seinecé's acknowledgment of what he already knows—is a tour de force of simultaneous misery and farce. It concludes with Seinecé's three-year-old daughter, Delphine, opening a tin and taking out a fruit drop:

> I saw her offer one to her father for the last time. And though as a rule I'm not very keen on that kind of sweet, in fact I rather despise them—they're really only a depressing, miserly recycling of the syrup left over from making candied fruit, retaining like a defect or a symptom the colors of the various fruits that have been steeped in them—my dislike doesn't affect this particular memory. Looking back, I see the kind of candy Delphine held out to her father's mouth in her sticky little pink fingers as delicate and translucent, like the ancient, blue or pink or yellow stained-glass windows you see in an old church that you visit on a dull day, and that are suddenly lit up by a ray of sunlight. But here, instead of the contrast between the bright glass and the dark lead framing it, what I still see and admire is the beauty of the little white threads, like the marks on antique viols, which ran through the sweets and didn't disappear even when you sucked them, as you saw when Delphine, looking strangely preoccupied, took the sticky little tetrahedron out of her mouth to make it shine in the electric light.

Like Charles himself, drawn to the fluent harmonies of an earlier music, Quignard gives us the rich continuities of a grand tradition, without false archaism and without quaintness. The author's extraordinary fusion of the descriptive and the emotive, in which wit and despair and enthrallment constantly collide, seems true to the quirkiness of modern experience, yet is tied to the proud ancestry of literature by the vigor of Quignard's exploration of the sensory world and by a trust in language which seems almost brazen after the long paralysis of the *nouveau roman*.

Charles Chenogne speaks only of German writers—of Wieland and of Grimmelshausen—but Quignard's chosen ancestor is surely Proust, whose great themes and melodies are evoked again and again, in an act of homage which itself seems part of a tradition, like the *apothéose* that Couperin composed for Lully, or the *tombeau* that Ravel composed for Couperin: a celebration at once fullhearted, modestly scaled, and determinedly the work of its own time and author. "À la Recherche du Temps Perdu" sounds in teasing details throughout Quignard's book—in the crushing forfeiture of a mother's awaited kiss by a child in bed, or in a shoreline view of mixed masts and steeples (which Proust took from Turner), or in the stained-glass candy

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that Delphine offers to her father, so like the windows of the church at Combray, which were, according to Proust, "never so brilliant as on days when the sun scarcely shone." And the romance of geography that is everywhere in Quignard—the delectation of places and of their names—becomes, as in Proust, an incantatory summoning, a thrilling taking into our mouths of the sweet and salt essences of earth. The as yet unseen Coutances was, to Proust's young narrator, "a Norman Cathedral, which its final consonants, rich and yellowing, crowned with a tower of butter." Quignard adds: "The light in Coutances in the Cotentin, and the light in Oudon, Ancenis and Liré, was pure gold. Coutances was a veritable mine of light." There are sentences like lists, like spells. And street names, too, have their pungency: Rue du Pont-de-Lodi, Rue du Monceau-Saint-Gervais, Rue Sébastien-Bottin. (Charles works for a time at an address on the last of these, in a "dark cubbyhole" at Éditions Gallimard—where Pascal Quignard is, by chance, an editor, and where his second novel since "The Salon in Württemberg" is about to be published.) Childhood summers were passed at Regnéville-sur-Mer, the very words suggesting "the notions both of reigning and renouncing, *régner* and *renier*, together with an echo of the word for 'mother' and the idea of something floating on the sea, and so in danger of sinking." Names, Charles reminds us, do not necessarily help one to understand what they themselves mean.

Charles goes to live with Isabelle by the sea in Normandy. It rains continuously, and Isabelle sobs and sleeps and thinks about nothing but Seinecé and Delphine, until Normandy itself seems to Charles like the kitchen oilcloth that is wiped never quite clean after dinner, "as bright and shiny as a waterlogged meadow, as smooth and sticky as a dying passion."

Now it is Charles who deserts, for Paris. The pace of the narrative quickens, as in a life where the most important events have already occurred. Several love affairs are sketched in with cruel hilarity; Charles's obsessive devotion is now concentrated on his collection of viols. He becomes, in time, the kind of musician who is famous for meticulous recordings but gives no concerts, who lives for music and craves silence. He remains alone.

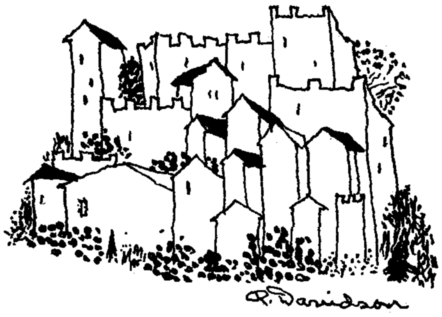
And then, after years, comes a sudden encounter of the onetime friends, and the sudden arrival of death, which puts an end to reunion and to Charles's reasons for remaining in Paris. He returns to Bergheim: to brush up on his own language, to remember, to write, to stay. And the book about betrayal becomes even more a book about forgiveness, about a quiet but ardent love for some of the people of this world, even a love for the things they have loved, and a profound sorrow for our common fate:

> Whom can I tell about these names, these lights, these games, and the joys connected with them? The people engulfed by time? I speak their names, but they no longer turn around when they're called.

In the old music room at Bergheim, Charles sits and writes this book—writes, despite the site and the attempted reclamation of a German childhood, in the French of his mother. "There's a cry inside me in that accent, and probably writing in French is a way of addressing that cry to her."

The room at Saint-Germain-en-Laye was never pink, he learns after twenty years; the walls were painted blue. It was the sunset hour when the young men habitually met—it was time itself—that colored the memory. Memory is unreliable. No two people in this book agree on what took place in the past, their own pasts: not mother and child, not friends, not lovers. But memory is, finally, all that we have. There are no Proustian immortalities of art offered here. We die in the death of our friends, as their memories of us die. There is barely time for tribute.

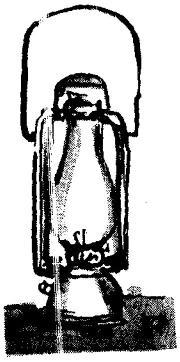
Charles's book—Quignard's book—could have been written in no language but French, could have emerged from no other tradition. A major popular breakthrough for the now forty-three-year-old author, previously known best for erudite and esoteric texts on music, ancient literature, and language, this is the first of Quignard's works to be exported, appearing in this English-language edition and also in Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese. As the quotations above should attest—and quoting from "The Salon in Württemberg" becomes addictive—Barbara Bray's translation is an authentic achievement, finding just the right and precarious equivalent for a tone that might be called the offhand sublime. The beauties of the prose seem to arise, quite modestly, out of nothing more than precise and loving observation. In addition, many of Quignard's characters—particularly the women—speak in a highly individualized and at times bizarre idiom, which is rendered with ease and zest. Isabelle, for example, a Mrs. Malaprop, is given to such bromides as "happy as a shark" and "He who dies by the sword shall perish by the fire!" (Whether Isabelle's way with words is a matter of unconscious foible or cultivated charm is never quite resolved.) There is a distancing that occurs in translation, of course: a refraction that casts into relief certain aspects of Quignard's reveries on language, and places the non-Gallic reader in a uniquely engaged position, struck again and again by the diffused glow of all those French names—places, people, candies—set like opals in English granite.



AMONG exiles, musicians are counted fortunate: their essential language requires no translation, and their work, if they are good enough, is ready to hand. For those musicians who escaped from Germany in the nineteen-thirties, when an entire culture went into exile, to play Bach and Beethoven and Schubert was a way of insisting on the vitality of an ideal that had disappeared from its native soil; of insisting on a homeland that would endure, if only in the music itself. The musicians in Nathan Shaham's novel "The Rosendorf Quartet" (translated from the Hebrew by Dalya Bilu; Grove Weidenfeld; $19.95) are German Jews, each a repository of Germanic musical culture, who come together in late 1936, in Palestine, to be buffeted and reshaped in the conflict between this passionately conserved idea of homeland—European, humanistic—and the realities of what is audaciously and improbably referred to as "the new motherland." Is it possible to pla Mozart in the desert, and what woul

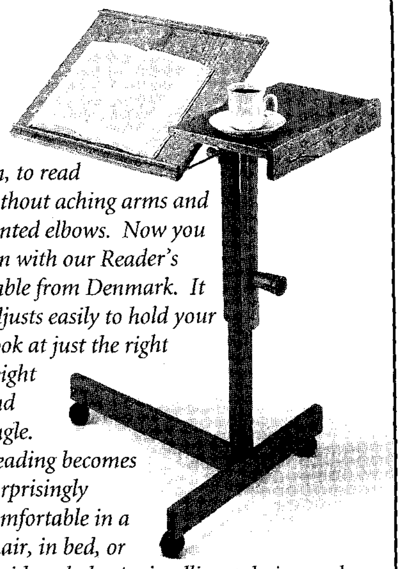
Mozart mean there? "It's hard to imagine a symphony orchestra in a kind of overgrown Mediterranean village without an opera or a cathedral" is the anxious and entirely unironic thought of Kurt Rosendorf, a former violinist in the Berlin Philharmonic, as he sails with dread toward the Promised Land.

The "village" is Tel Aviv, "a suburb of a nonexistent city" according to Egon Loewenthal, a Berlin writer of black satire and a former inmate of Dachau. He and Rosendorf become friends on the voyage that neither wants to be making—from West to East, "against the direction of history"—and each is at least slightly encouraged by the distinguished, if lugubrious, presence of the other. In Tel Aviv, the Palestine Symphony Orchestra has been formed, partly for humanitarian reasons—seventy-two players selected out of five hundred applicants from the great German city orchestras ("I'm going to die," a rejected oboist laments, "because I'm a mediocre oboe player")—and partly to fortify the European bonds of the frightened immigrant nation. Rosendorf himself was on the verge of international fame when the Nazis' racial laws cost him his job; he takes pride in having been invited to Tel Aviv without need of an audition. An earlier quartet led by Rosendorf had travelled throughout Germany, and had been successful despite imbalances caused by the determination of the second violinist—as the only Aryan in the group—to play even Haydn and Mozart scherzos "with exaggerated reverence, as if every piece of music composed by a German was family property, to be protected from strangers by barking." A consummate musician and a man of gentle, even temper, Rosendorf retains the ability and the reputation to re-create, from a wholly different and unknown company of musicians, an elect among the elect: a chamber quartet for the new motherland.



In Palestine, chamber music, which has long been "a way of life" for Rosendorf, becomes a way of sustaining life for the entire newly formed quartet. First and second violin, viola, cello: four voices—united and individual and mutually supporting—that inspire Loewenthal, who attends rehearsals, to burst with metaphor. "A world, and the fullness thereof, in miniature . . . a sterile laboratory for well-tempered human relations; four fish in a net which grows tighter the harder they struggle." In Shaham's book, the players struggle with one another, with the interpretation of music, with their disinheritance of language and of trust, and with a country that has more need of field laborers than of fiddlers and where the very climate causes the strings on their instruments to go limp. Only one of the players seriously studies Hebrew, intending to stay—Rosendorf's young second violinist, Konrad Friedman, who is considered a "local," having arrived in "Eretz Israel" five years earlier, as a twenty-two-year-old Zionist ready to burn his violin and ennoble his soul with work in the cowsheds. It is thanks to Friedman's persuasive idealism ("Every village is Jerusalem") that the quartet agrees to play for any outlying kibbutz that scrapes together their minimal fee, though it means travelling by armored car and under police escort, being subjected to the inevitable pressures and dangers of the relentlessly divided political society that their music is meant to transcend. Even differences over tempi are fraught with moral and political tension—between those who believe in scrupulous adherence to tradition and those who, like Friedman, maintain that music must adapt; which is to say, accelerate. Friedman recalls how his revered theory teacher changed position on this very question of continuity: "After he was set upon by S.S. in the street on his way to the concert hall and heard his heart beating more than a hundred times a minute, he understood that what was moderato in Haydn's day was no longer so in the days of Hitler."

Nathan Shaham was born in Tel Aviv and is of an age to have been a child at the early concerts of the actual Palestine Symphony Orchestra (the historical accuracy of his novel extends even to its repertory). This is his first work to appear in the United States, and it has been translated by Dalya Bilu into blunt and efficient English. Shaham is an old-fashioned writer of ideas, earnest and straightforward, with an eye on the spirit of Thomas Mann hovering high above. Concomitantly,



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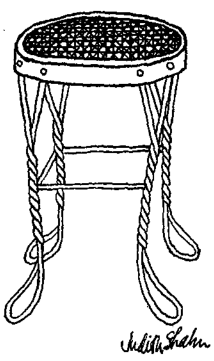
he is curiously lacking in—even uninterested in—the kind of linguistic fluidity that his narrative method seems to demand. "The Rosendorf Quartet" is divided into sections in which each member of the ensemble relates his or her story—a succession of voices whose accounts overlap and set different views of common events side by side. Israeli novelists have demonstrated a special attentiveness to the fractured and unreliable nature of truth as it is shared out among protagonists. Both A. B. Yehoshua and David Grossman have experimented with this fuguelike construction of conflicting voices: there are four in Grossman's early "The Smile of the Lamb," nine in Yehoshua's "A Late Divorce." But Shaham lacks the energetic ventriloquism of these writers (what in Grossman later approaches a possession, a speaking in tongues), and his characters remain sealed off in their monologues. The formal and somewhat overupholstered accents with which Shaham starts out seem right for the stiffly self-conscious Rosendorf, but these qualities do not alter—not in vocabulary or rhythm or color—when the other characters take over; they all sound more or less alike.



This tonal invariance in part explains the weakness of the third and fourth sections—viola and cello—whose characters are cast farthest from the author's natural voice, and seem contrived mainly for contrast and for an element of dramatic action, which Shaham's digressive style is strained to convey. Eva Staubenfeld, the violist, is a sexually rapacious ice-goddess out of a different class of fiction, nursing her dark, secret wound. The full dimensions of her youthful tragedy are not revealed until late in the book, but the character helpfully allows us to place her with lines like "I'm a woman whose values have been warped by life, but I've learned to live with it," and "I had been and would always be an enigma to him." What has been presented as her razor-sharp intelligence, musical and otherwise, is placed in some question by the terms in which she contemplates the end of an affair with Rosendorf: "We should play the last chord and conclude the marvelous work of art we have been composing with our perfect bodies fortissimo." (This is not the first instance of mad musical metaphor. Rosendorf himself told us, "All the dissonances were resolved in bed. There all ended on a strong chord, and with a major cadence," and he wasn't even talking about the same woman.) In the cellist's narrative, an unconvincing tale of contacts with the anti-British underground becomes muddled and eventually is dismissed with what sounds like the plot summary of another novel: "I don't know if I'll ever know what happened and how. In any case, the end was swift and dramatic, with everything rushing toward the inevitable conclusion."

What is remarkable, given these lapses, is the persistent strength and interest of Shaham's central concerns. These are rallied in the book's final, fifth section—"The Rosendorf Quartet" itself is a quintet—through the congenial speculations and conclusions of the inveterate talker Loewenthal, that most German of German writers ("It gives me pleasure just to look at the letters of the word 'German' on the page"), who has found himself grumbling in a despised language in the Holy Land because he was not famous enough to secure a visa for France: "At that moment I hated the French like a true German: a nation of snobs who had invented great liberties and small meannesses!" In Dachau, Loewenthal's method of resistance was to speak a better, richer German than his guards (who understood, and hit him harder). The German language *remains* his consolation and his revenge. Of all the dangerous errors of Zionism there is none worse, as Loewenthal sees it, than the revival of Hebrew, an artificial tongue with a meagre vocabulary expanded by committee and inflated by pathos, the results of which will, finally—should the Zionist venture succeed—"cut off an entire generation of Jews from the European languages that gave birth to the concepts of modern science, modern literature, and political thought." But, he concludes, the venture is surely hopeless: after all, given any choice, "who would agree to exchange European culture for provincial improvisations in a dead language?" Undoubtedly, we lose something by reading these words in translation rather than in the original Hebrew.

The quartet becomes Loewenthal's obsession, his subject. He plans a novel, but gets no further than the outline. (He does assure us that he will eliminate the unfortunately melodramatic realities of the violist's life, which "can safely be left to the clichés of trashy romances for chambermaids"; *his* work will aim only for the highest abstractions.) But music is a difficult subject, at once "the last gasp of Western civilization" and "an emotional pimp." A man who went dry-eyed through Dachau can weep over Bach, and that man can even be Loewenthal himself: "Only words can protect human beings." Loewenthal abandons his novel as a bad idea. After the war, he goes briefly to America before returning, at last and for good, to Germany.

Can there be such a thing as an Israeli novel—or a German novel, for that matter—that is not understood on some level as an allegory of the national psyche; as a response to, if not an attempted explanation of, moral casualties sustained and inflicted? Egon Loewenthal felt himself condemned for neglecting crucial world issues to concentrate on a musical quartet in 1937: "On the Day of Judgment I shall be sent to the penal colony of History for the crime of desertion." Nathan Shaham writes about a musical quartet, which he sets in Palestine in 1937, and the result is a book about the critical issue of desertion itself—cultural, ethical, emotional. Loewenthal is allowed a brief postscript to his account, dated 1955, in which he lists the varied fates—emigration, death in war, resignation to Israel—of the members of the Rosendorf Quartet. He does not tell us anything about his renewed life in Germany, saying only hat he will not respond to demands to ustify his decision. He does not menion forgiveness, and we are left to wonder at the price a man will pay in order to go home.

—CLAUDIA ROTH PIERPONT

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[*From a court decision reported in the New York Law Journal*]

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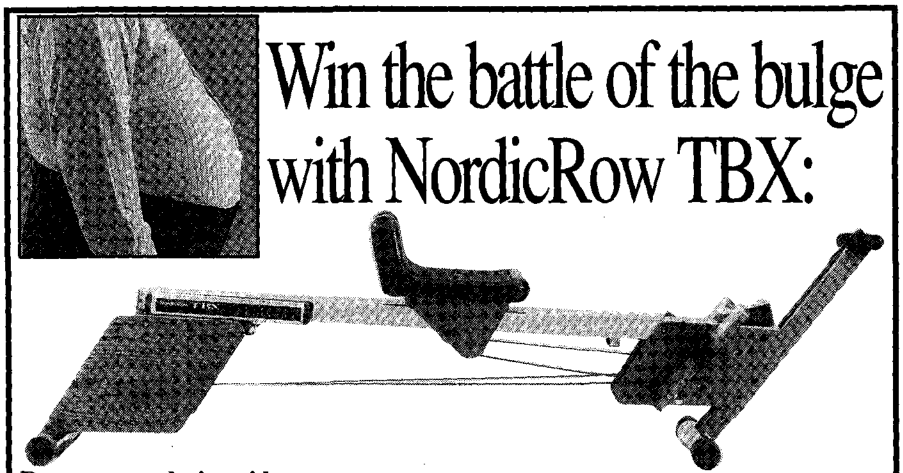
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